

## A Touch, A Kiss, A Whisper Of Love

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by [DivinityInMotion](#)

### Summary

"Things are really great the way they are at the moment, and I don't want to do anything to mess it up," Severus said slowly. He kept his head steady, eyes fixed out at a star low on the horizon.

Severus refused to look at James. He needed to get this off his chest and it would be impossible to do so if that penetrating gaze was fixated on him. He'd only recognised his new feelings for what they were about a week ago; an infatuation. He never considered the possibility that he could be attracted to men, but it seems like James might be the exception.

Or maybe, he was the rule.

It was still too soon for Severus to tell.

"But sometimes, a thing just feels so right, you know?" Severus finished. James didn't say anything. They both just kept looking straight out across the Great Lake.

OR

After Severus Snape and James Potter find themselves stuck in an awkward detention together, an unlikely friendship forms. As their newfound friendship develops, James discovers something new about himself while Severus tries to fight his growing attraction to the Gryffindor boy.

## Notes

Hi everyone! It's been a pretty hectic couple of years since I was last super active on AO3. This idea hit me like a friggen freight train and I've been non stop writing so hopefully a new chapter should be up once a week at the LEAST.

This fic is heavy based on Casey and Izzie from the Netflix show Atypical. You don't have to watch Atypical to understand what's going on in this fic (although it's a great show and I highly recommend it), I've just used some of the plot points between Casey and Izzie and adapted it to Severus and James.

I created a spotify account and a playlist to go along with this fanfiction. The link is [here!](#)

The first four songs are the main songs that inspired this fic, the next several songs are some of the more relevant chapter title songs, and the rest are songs that I listened to while writing this. I hope you enjoy!

The title of this fic is from Dangerous by Michael Jackson. Anyways, I hope you enjoy this fic :)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

# I Envision How You Lie Awake And Agonise

## Chapter Notes

Title for this chapter is from Savior In The Clockwork by Avantasia

Dread is not an emotion Severus Snape is overly familiar with. Throughout his life he has planned thoroughly for every test, every exam, every bloody obstacle that had been thrown his way. But when Lily Evans, fiery red hair whipping around in the cool September winds, locks eyes with him for the first time in two years, that unfamiliar feeling settles deep into his stomach.

The silvery doe Patronus that Severus had conjured up only moments ago disappeared into thin air as he stuffed his wand back into his baggy robes. Lily's bow mouth was slightly parted in shock, eyes shifting to the left where the Patronus was. She only knew of three others their age, besides herself, who could cast the Patronus charm. James Potter, Remus Lupin, and Sirius Black. After all, it was an incredibly advanced spell and one needed to be pure at heart to be able to summon a sprit guardian.

"How did you do that?" Lily asked softly. That was her main question. Everyone said that Severus was going to be a death eater after he called her that foul name two years ago. Lily had heard the rumours, but no future Death Eater could produce something so beautiful. Severus straightened his posture and readopted that cold gaze Lily was accustomed to.

"The Patronus? I believe you already know the answer to that, we are in the same Defence Against the Dark Arts class after all," Severus retorts, thin arms crossing tightly over his chest.

"No, I know that. I just meant..." Lily trailed off, not knowing how to ask the question without further aggravating the teen standing opposite her.

"You just meant how can a Death Eater such as myself produce a Patronus?" Severus scoffed, Lily didn't miss the hurt look that flashed across his face, "Do you really think that lowly of me?"

The truth was that she didn't, and deep down, she never had.

"No, of course not Severus-" Lily started.

"Oh, it's Severus now?" Severus accused before he could stop the biting words from coming out. Before Lily could become upset, he said, "I'm sorry, that was childish."

"Look, I'm sorry that I interrupted your charms session, I didn't know you would be down here by the Black Lake this morning. I'll just leave you to it," Lily said, trying to keep her emotions at bay. It was too much for her, seeing Severus act this cold to her. She felt like she'd stepped back into her fifth year. Lily turned to walk away and stopped to say one final thing.

"I always knew you'd never really stoop low enough to become a Death Eater."

Severus stood, stunned, just for a moment as he watched Lily's retreating form. He snapped out of it and yelled, "Wait! Lily!"

She halted in her tracks and looked back over her shoulder. Severus grabbed his book bag up off

the damp grass before chasing her up the hill. He reached Lily's side. She noticed how she has to look up into his eyes, while in the past she had always been the taller of the two.

"I'm sorry, I truly mean it. I'm disgusted and ashamed of how I acted on that day, and if I could change the past, I would in a heartbeat," Severus apologised, never taking his pleading eyes off Lily.

"I forgive you Severus, I-," Lily sighed, trying to find the right words, "I haven't been the greatest friend to you either. My father heard about your mother passing and told me, I'm sorry I wasn't there for you last year when Eileen died, I'm so sorry..."

"Don't apologise, it's all in the past now," Severus sighed and ran a hand through his hair. He didn't have potions first thing in the morning that day, so his hair lacked the thin layer of grease it usually got after attending the subject. They both started slowly making their way back to the main entrance of the castle.

"Hey, so about that Patronus you cast back there, is there any reason you're out here, *alone*, practising it?" Lily asked. That seemed to get Severus' attention.

"Well, that's what I'm puzzled about. Up until recently, my Patronus has been a Great Horned Owl, but on the first day of term, it changed into a doe. I've read about Patronuses, and it's rare that they change forms. If it happens, it only happens after undergoing a great trauma, but that hasn't happened to me recently. Do you have any ideas?" Severus asked. Lily pondered the conundrum for a moment, but only one ridiculous explanation came to mind.

"It could be a premonition of sorts," Lily offered. When Severus gave her a baffled look she continued, "here me out! You don't know what it means yet, but we know that a change of Patronus is always a big deal! So, that means that the meaning behind the change will become obvious in the future."

"Oh please Lily, I've never believed in Divination, and I know you're not a massive supporter of it either," Severus scoffed, a hint of amusement in his tone.

"What do you mean? You used to spend all your spare time up in the Astronomy tower, and I'll bet good money that those habits haven't changed over the past year," Lily teased, a wry smile gracing her features.

"Yes, but that's because I'm fascinated by Astronomy, not Astrology. There's a very important difference there," Severus explained, not that Lily didn't know that already. It's strange how quickly they fell back into their old friendship, especially with all the playful teasing that they used to be so fond of.

"You've seen my Patronus, but what's yours?" Severus asked as they turned the corner into the Great Hall. Seventh Years had a free slot on their schedule on a Friday morning, and most tended to spend it in the Great Hall or in the library.

"Mine? It's a lioness, it took me a while before I could properly hold down a corporeal form though," Lily answered.

"That's still an impressive achievement though, congratulations," Severus gave her a small smile. His first in months.

"Thank you, you too." A comfortable silence grew between them, but then a burning question came to Severus' mind.

“So there’s a question that I’ve been meaning to ask you,” Severus started slowly, “it’s about you and Potter. Are you two an item now?” Severus was dreading the answer. He had long since gotten over his childhood crush on Lily, but he still wanted the best for her. All he knew was that Potter was far from the best for her. What Severus wasn’t expecting was the faint blush that rose to Lily’s cheeks at the sound of the Head Boy’s name.

“We aren’t a couple,” Lily stated.

“Why not? He’s been annoying you for years now, I doubt he would have given up in his final year,” Severus asked.

“That’s the thing, he’s really matured over the past year, even *you* would be surprised,” Lily let out a shallow laugh that didn’t reach her eyes, “I’ve finally fallen for him, but he started dating Mary MacDonald over the summer. You know, the brunette Gryffindor one? I mean, she used to be nice to me...”

“Mary MacDonald? That’s a joke right?” Severus laughed. Lily’s gaze snapped back up to her friend’s face.

“Please, Sev, I hate to backstab other girls, but she really does my head in.” Severus laughed at Lily’s expression, her face creased with annoyance at the mere thought of the girl.

“I know what you mean, I tutored her in Defence Against the Dark Arts last year, she’s quite a handful when she wants to be,” Severus confessed. Lily couldn’t hold back the laughter that bubbled up her throat. Soon her and Severus had dissolved into a fit of laughter and they didn’t care whose attention they had, they were too busy making up for lost time.

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It happened in late October.

Severus and Lily were making their way to the library after an early dinner to get a start on their potions essays they had received earlier that day.

Severus was carrying Lily’s books for her, his arms filled with two sets of parchment and two Advanced Potion-Making books. That feeling of dread he was becoming more accustomed to returned when he spotted a head of curly black hair at the opposite end of the corridor. Black. Potter and Lupin were with them too, but Severus was long past the point of being afraid of the werewolf. In fact, they’ve helped each other out more than once on their astronomy homework.

“Snivellus!” Black’s voice rang down the corridor, making Severus’ blood run cold. Lily was right about James, he had matured more. At the end of their sixth year, he stopped participating in Sirius’ pranks so he could focus on his campaign for Head Boy. Only, this meant he was now a bystander to Sirius’ pranks. Black seemed to be the only one who refused to grow up. Even Peter Pettigrew matured and moved onto a different group of people.

Before Severus or Lily could say anything, Sirius had drawn his wand and shouted “Flipendo!”. Before Sirius could laugh and celebrate, Severus cast a wandless protego and the jinx bounced back towards the trio. The jinx hit James square in the chest, causing him to flying backwards into a stone pillar topped with an orange flame. The force of the blow winded James as he fell on his back beside the pillar.

The pillar rocked on the spot and fell on its side, cracking when it hit the stone ground. In James and Severus’ defence, the pillar was as old as the Earth itself and was due to crumble any day. What they weren’t prepared for was Professor McGonagall to storm up to them, having witnessed

the entire scene unfold.

“Mr Potter and Mr Snape!” Severus tried to suppress a chill, that tone never meant good things.

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James and Severus were escorted by Professor McGonagall to the Headmaster’s office. She informed Professor Dumbledore of what had occurred only minutes beforehand.

“Remember when you said that if anything like this happened between the two of them again you wanted to deal with it personally? Here’s your chance. If you’ll excuse me Albus, there’s some roast lamb in the Great Hall that I don’t feel like missing tonight,” McGonagall said. She left without a backwards glance. Severus was curious about what she meant by ‘if anything like this happened between the two of them again’.

Dumbledore picked a sherbet lemon wrapped in plastic out of the glass bowl resting on his desk. He fiddled with the ends of the wrapping for a moment before discarding it and popping the sweet into his mouth.

“Now, Mr Potter, Mr Snape, I do not know who was at fault for tonight’s events, but one of our stone pillars was destroyed at your hands. Thankfully, this is a school of magic and the problem was fixed almost immediately,” Dumbledore smiled at the two students, mirth in his eyes.

“For your detention tonight I’ll have to confiscate your wands.” Albus held out a wrinkled hand and waited for the two reluctant boys to give him their wands.

“Severus I know you have been studying wandless magic, so please refrain from utilising those skills tonight,” Albus requested.

“*What?* Since when can you do wandless magic?” James asked, trying to keep the shock from his voice as he eyed Severus up and down in his chair.

“It’s hardly your concern, Potter,” Severus snapped coolly. Dumbledore cleared his throat, and both heads whipped back to the warlock.

“None of that bickering here tonight, it won’t help you. There’s no reason for you to be fighting like children still,” Dumbledore’s eyes lost their usual twinkle and gained a more serious look, “there is a war ahead. Voldemort—” James and Severus winced “and his followers will be the only ones to benefit from our fighting. If we can’t stand together, we’ve already lost. You don’t have to love each other, but you have to love each other.”

“But sir—” Severus started, but Dumbledore pointedly ignored him.

“Tonight, you’ll have to stay in my office until you have sorted out your differences and become friends. What’s the muggle expression? Ah, yes, you must kiss and make up. Now, if you two don’t mind me, I’ll just be heading out to the Great Hall for a spot of dinner. That roast lamb Minerva suggested does sound quite delightful,” Albus smiled and rose from his chair behind the oak desk. He reached the entrance to his office and began placing some kind of ward on the door. Severus guessed it will only allow the door to open once it senses audible apologies.

“Hey sir!” James quickly shouted out, desperate to get out of this detention, “Before you go, uh, I think we’ve actually figured it out already,” James tried, awkwardly rubbing the back of his neck as his gaze fluttered between Severus and Dumbledore.

“Mr Potter, I don’t think that’s true at all, goodnight,” Dumbledore said with a final smile. He shut the door behind him and the wards sealed into place.

Great, Severus thought, he was stuck here with James bloody Potter.

# Midnight Trepidations

## Chapter Summary

Severus and James are stuck in detention together, and they both discover some secrets about each other.

## Chapter Notes

CW: alcohol use

There's a scene in the show where the two characters get drunk together in detention, and it's a bit ooc for Sev and James, but it's a good bonding scene so I included it anyways.

Chapter title is from Picture Frames by Rei Brown.

Hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Watching James' leg bounce out of the corner of his eye was starting to agitate Severus. He couldn't wait until he no longer had to see his arrogant face every day. Ever since the incident in the Shrieking Shack, James had made more of an effort to leave Severus alone - most likely due to his own guilt. However that doesn't mean that Severus is any less resentful towards him. Severus can barely stand to be alone in a room with him, that must was proving to be obvious.

Though, Severus has to admit it's impressive that James hasn't said anything over the several minutes they've been sitting together in silence. His full lips remained pursed and his hands were clasped tightly in his lap. It was as if there was too much tension coursing through the Gryffindor's body. Every so often, James would run a broad hand through his thick hair, refusing to let it lose its signature windswept look. Severus was strangely entranced by the way James would lift his hand every half a minute to fix his hair, tuck a loose strand behind his ear, or sweep it up off his forehead. If Severus didn't know any better, he would say that James was nervous.

"Would it kill you to stop messing with your hair every few seconds?" Severus snapped, his arms crossing over his chest. A shocked look passed over James' face. He hadn't expected Severus to talk at all, or at least to not talk until Dumbledore returned.

"I knew you couldn't keep your eyes off me, Snape," James teased. He watched as a brilliant red blush dusted Severus' cheeks as he failed to find a comeback. They lapsed into another awkward silence. James looked like he wanted to say something, and when he opened his mouth to talk before deciding otherwise and shutting it, Severus gave up.

"Spit it out, Potter," Severus drawled, leaning back into his chair and placing his arms on the armrests.



“Um, so, you and Lily, hey? Didn’t know you were into redheads” James asked with a teasing smirk resting on his face. That’s what he wanted to ask Severus?

“So you and Mary, hey? Didn’t know you liked them ditzzy,” Severus retorted, and to his surprise, James laughed.

“Yeah, she can be a handful at times, that’s for sure,” James replied with an easy smile. That was an answer Severus hadn’t expected.

“To be clear, Evans and I aren’t together,” Severus paused and noted that James was looking at him expectantly, “We’re just friends.” James pondered Severus’ response for a moment.

“That explains a lot, she’s been happier in these past two months than she has been for the past two years, did you know that?” James replied.

“No, but isn’t she friends with you, Black, and Lupin now? No doubt you three kept me off her mind,” Severus asked.

“Yes, but she still keeps us in line,” James laughed. Severus gave a small smile at the image of Lily scolding James, which didn’t go unnoticed by the Gryffindor boy. Severus was uneasy, he was expecting Potter to hurl an insult his way any second.

“What about MacDonald then, what’s the story there? All Lily used to complain about is how you would hound her to go out with you,” Severus asked, turning to meet James head on rather than just talking to the wall filled with portraits of previous headmasters. He remembered Lily’s confession early September, and was curious to see if James actually cared about Mary or if it was a ruse like Lily suspected.

“Well, you can only hear ‘no’ so many times,” James said with a small smile that didn’t reach his eyes, “and Mary was there for me. So before I even knew it, we were together.”

“But who cares about Mary, how did you convince Evans to be your friend again? Seems like you ended it on pretty bad terms,” James asked, raising a perfectly shaped eyebrow. Severus considered whether or not he should tell him the truth. What was it to him?

“Actually, she approached me. It was sort of an accident, but it was nice to talk to her again after what happened back in fifth year,” Severus paused, he ran a hand through his black tresses and sighed, “well we briefly spoke at my mother’s funeral, but that’s only because our mothers were friends- sorry, I don’t know why I’m telling you any of this,” Severus trailed off, embarrassed by his confession.

“Oh Severus, I’m so sorry, I had no idea you went through that,” James said in a hushed tone, as if he was afraid of his own statement. Severus, however, didn’t miss the way James made an effort to say his first name instead of his last. He relished in the sound of his name, something that felt so unfamiliar when it came from that set of lips. There was no reason to aggravate Potter if he was feeling nicer than usual, so Severus went along with it.

“What? Pot- James how would you know that? You *barely* talk to me,” Severus said, not keeping the amusement off his face.

“I talk to you! I just say mean things,” James teased.

“Understatement of the century,” Severus shot back. They both started laughing together, James held his side and doubled over. This current James was nice, Severus thought, and he almost felt like he could trust him too. Once they quietened down again, James turned his armchair to face

Severus.

“You know, you’re not what I expected,” James said as he sat back down in his chair. He eyed Severus again as he positioned his own chair to face James.

“Well I’m not like the other guys, I don’t get to screw up,” Severus explained. By the look on James’ face he had no clue what he meant by that.

“Last year, Avery crashed his Cleansweep Six into the Whomping Willow and you know what his parents did? They bought him a new broomstick,” Severus paused, “and Mulciber has a stash of Firewhiskey and Dragon Barrel Brandy underneath his dorm bed just in case he gets bored,” Severus let out a laugh at his last statement.

“Really?” James chuckled, he always pinned Mulciber as the alcoholic type.

“Yeah, *really*. But for me? I don’t get the luxury of screwing up, especially now that mum’s gone. My father is a muggle, and he *hates* all types of magic. He forbade my mother from doing magic in the house. If I do anything that gets me expelled, then I’m saying goodbye to the world of magic for good,” Severus explained, a forlorn expression crossed his face, “that’s why I’ve always condemned your behaviour towards me and your pranks, even if it was just joking around to begin with all the way back in our first year.”

“Is that why you’ve always been a snarky dick to me, even when I wasn’t being serious?” James asked.

“Probably, or maybe I’m just a snarky dick,” Severus replied with a soft laugh. Severus could see the pity on James’ face, despite him laughing along with Severus just seconds ago. If there was one thing Severus hated being, it was being pitied. Then, an all too familiar mischievous look appear on James’ face.

“Seeing that we’re stuck here indefinitely, how about we make our own fun?” James noticed how suggestive the words sounded as he was speaking, but he didn’t care anymore. “You said you can do wandless magic right? I’m sure Mulciber won’t notice if that bottle of Firewhiskey goes missing from his collection.” James waited for Severus to catch on to what he was saying. It took him a moment, but once James raised his eyebrows at Severus, he knew what he was insinuating. Was James serious about this? They could get caught. On the other hand, how often was Severus able to enjoy the company of someone other than Lily?

“Accio Mulciber’s Firewhiskey,” Severus commanded without raising an arm. About half a minute later, the bottle flew into the room through a small, open window at the topmost part of the office.

“Wow, I didn’t think that would actually work,” Severus muttered, loud enough for James to hear and grin at his words. Severus transfigured two empty glass bowls on Dumbledore’s desk into glass cups.

“Woah, that’s pretty advanced stuff to be doing without a wand,” James praised, awestruck. Severus poured a generous amount of Firewhiskey into the two glasses before handing one to James.

“It never hurts to learn a bit of wandless magic, you never know when you could need it,” Severus explained with a shrug. He held his glass with two thin hands, staring down into the amber liquid.

“I’m tired of trying to be perfect all the time,” Severus whispered.

“Then consider this as your chance to let go for a while. This is a safe environment. Well, as safe as

it can be when I'm around," James joked. He then took a long swig from his own cup, grimacing as the liquid burned its way down his throat. Severus couldn't help but laugh at the way James' face screwed up. He then took a swig from his own cup.

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"So are you going to teach me the secrets of your immaculate complexion?" James begged as he placed his cup down on the desk after draining it for the third time. Severus almost choked on his liquor after James spoke. If Dumbledore came back now, they were both screwed.

"Are you kidding me? That's a new one, I only ever hear about how pasty I look," Severus laughed, a rich sound that James wasn't used to hearing, but he had a feeling he was going to be hearing it more often from now on.

"Yeah, but pale looks better on you, if you were more tan it wouldn't suit you," James explained in a serious manner, although Severus wasn't taking this conversation seriously at all.

"Knock it off," Severus snapped. To his dismay, he could feel his cheeks heating up.

"No, seriously! Your skin is unmarred, all the girls I know would kill to have skin like yours, so how do you keep it like that?" James pushed further.

"Oh come on, of all the things we could be talking about right now, you choose my *skin*?" Severus asked and kicked James' shoe with his own. He was desperate to shift the conversation away from his looks.

"Well, like what?"

"Huh?" Severus finished his own cup and set it down on the desk. Severus wondered how James stomachached three glasses of this shit.

"Like what could we talk about?" James asked again.

"Like... Lily," Severus reached, trying to find common ground between them.

"Yeah, what about her?"

"Well, I know you're with Mary, but do you still have feelings for her?" Severus watched James clench his jaw. "Hey, whatever is said here doesn't leave this room. Besides, who would I tell?" Severus joked.

"No," James started.

"No what?"

"No, I'm not interested in Lily anymore. In fact, I see her more as a sister I never had. I can see why you were so desperate to stay friends with her after your fight, she's a wonderful person," James confessed.

"So then what you have with MacDonald is the real thing? She's not a rebound or whatever you call it?" Severus was well aware that he was prying at this point, but he couldn't help his own curiosity.

He expected James to immediately defend himself, but the silence that followed made Severus cringe. Did that mean that he guessed correctly?

"It's funny you say that. I didn't start dating Mary as a rebound or anything, but before we were

dating she was a distraction for me, as awful as that sounds. Now though, I think the reason that I spend so much time with her is because I don't want to be alone with my thoughts," James vented, eyes downcast. Severus didn't know how to respond for a moment, he had no clue what James meant by that.

"Not because she's your girlfriend and you love her very much?" Severus drawled, trying to decipher what James was implying.

"No, I mean, Mary's great, but sometimes it feels not quite right with her. It's like she's from a different planet, and won't ever know what it's like on my planet," James continued, nodding to himself as he spoke, like he was trying to reassure himself. "You know what I mean?"

"No, not really," Severus said and shook his head. He'd never been in a relationship before, so he couldn't imagine what a relationship feeling 'not quite right' would be like.

"Damn it, consider yourself lucky then," James teased. He reached for the bottle of Firewhiskey but Severus got to it first.

"I think we've had enough for the night, don't you?" Severus said, but James didn't register his words. Instead, a solemn look graced James' face.

"Severus, I-, I'm sorry for the way everything went down in the Shrieking Shack that night. I've never forgiven myself for letting Sirius do that, and I can't believe that any of us thought it would be a good idea in the first place," James sighed. Severus let out a breath he didn't realise he was holding.

"And I'm sorry for what happened earlier tonight, for not stopping Sirius from attacking you for no good reason. Fuck it, I'm sorry about everything," James finished. Severus felt a wave of fondness rush through him for James, he was being sincere with his apology. This was something completely new to him. Severus Snape one week ago would have laughed at the idea of James Potter apologising to him.

"Thank you, I appreciate that, and I'm sorry that I hit deflected that knockback jinx into your chest. We're only here because of me," Severus said.

"Well, we're here because Sirius cast the damn spell in the first place," James replied. The two laughed together, but were interrupted when the door to Dumbledore's office swung open. The wards had disarmed.

"Hey, so I was right, the wards did need a verbal apology from each of us," Severus mused. James whipped back around to face the raven haired boy.

"What? You-, you knew that the whole time? Why didn't you just make me apologise so you could leave?" James asked.

"Because I liked talking to you tonight," Severus shrugged and stood up, letting the blood flow return to his previously crossed legs, "besides, it was only a hunch." He reverted the two glasses back to bowls and shrunk the bottle of Firewhiskey so it could easily fit into his robe pocket.

"Are those our wands?" James was already at the door of the office and picked up a wooden box that was on the ground outside. Severus walked over to him and peered into the box. The two wands were inside.

"Yes, what else would they be?" Severus asked and lightly nudged James in the side with his elbow, making him sway on the spot. The alcohol was hitting James harder than Severus had

thought.

“I-, I don’t know, maybe Dumbledore is trying to trick us and this is a second test?” James wondered aloud. Severus rolled his eyes and grabbed James by the wrist to guide him down the spiralling staircase. Once they reached the bottom James planted his feet to the ground so Severus stopped in his tracks.

“What is it?” Severus asked, hand still firmly gripping his wrist.

“Can you take me back to the Gryffindor Tower? It’s a lot of stairs and I don’t want to fall,” James asked, a hand sheepishly resting on the back of his neck.

“Is that just your way of asking me to spend more time with you?” Severus smirked.

“Well...would you be mad if it was?” James asked.

“No, of course not. Besides, I don’t want you to fall backwards down the stairs and crack your skull open, only to have me be found liable for it,” Severus teased, finally releasing his hold on James’ wrist as they began their long walk to the Gryffindor Tower.

“Hey! Have a bit more faith in me than that,” James shot back as he stumbled to catch up to Severus’ long strides. While James was only a few inches taller than Severus, the Slytherin was still almost 6 feet tall and could easily outpace the man.

Just as they were almost there, having spent the journey talking about nothing and everything, James caught Severus’ attention.

“Hey, tonight’s been surprisingly fun. I don’t care what other people think, I’d get drunk with you every night if I could,” James smiled.

“That’s how addictions start,” Severus mused, eyeing James who burst out laughing.

“See? That’s what I mean, I didn’t realise how dry you are. How come Lily never told me about how funny you can be?” James queried. What Severus found more hilarious was James’ blatant overreactions to anything he said.

“I know what you mean though, we should do this again sometime, maybe when we’re a bit more sober. Also, if you want to ask Lily why she never spoke to you about me, you can, she’s right up ahead,” Severus pointed her out standing next to the Gryffindor common room portrait. Remus and Sirius were by her side, the latter trying to hide his annoyance and the former trying not to laugh at the way James was practically leaning on Severus, unable to walk by himself anymore. Mary was on Lily’s other side, looking like she had been waiting for James to show up for a long time.

Severus spared another quick look at James, now it was time to go back to reality, although he felt like his reality will be quite different from now on.

## Chapter End Notes

Drunk words are sober thoughts.

Please leave a kudos and a comment if you're enjoying this so far or if you have any feedback :)



# Dissolve The Nerves That Have Just Begun

## Chapter Summary

Severus struggles with the new attention from James, and with a little meddling from Lily, he sees him in a different light.

## Chapter Notes

Ok I changed Rita to Mary MacDonald because I could've sworn Rita was the same age as them, turns out she's 9 years older whoops, big mistake on my part

Chapter title is from True by Spandau Ballet.

The look on Sirius' face as Severus guided James back to the portrait was almost worth the hangover he knew he'd have in the morning. Even Remus shared Sirius' bewildered look at the sight of the two men conversing like they were old friends reuniting.

"I can't fucking believe this. The first person Prongs gets drunk with is Snivellus, what about us?" Sirius complained.

"Yeah, likewise for Severus and I. I wish you wouldn't call him that name, Sirius. I honestly didn't think he'd touch alcohol at all in his life," Lily spoke. She didn't take her eyes off the odd site of Severus and James until they were staying right in front of them.

Mary immediately snatched James away from Severus and pulled him into a quick kiss. James was the only one to miss the hurt look that crossed over Lily's face, it was like Mary was marking her territory. It obviously caught James off guard because he started giggling oddly afterwards.

"Hi to you too, babe," James greeted her with a smile.

"*Babe?* Since when do you call me babe?" Mary asked, eyebrows furrowing.

"I-"

"Severus, what did you do to James?" Mary laughed as she addressed the only Slytherin present.

"Hey, this was his idea to be fair," Severus answered, holding his hands up in defence.

"Just like it was your idea to 'lose' your Defence Against the Dark Arts notes so I wouldn't cheat off them?" Mary pushed.

"Hey, how would you ever learn if you were just copying whatever I wrote down?" Severus shot back with a smirk. James was growing more and more confused.

"Hold on, you two are *friends*?" James asked, gesturing to the both of them.

“Friends is an overstatement, I only tutored her last year in Defence Against the Dark Arts,” Severus explained.

“Oh please, I know how big a softy you are deep down. I just turned on the waterworks and you felt bad so you helped me,” Mary teased.

“Are you kidding me? I should have let you fail!” Severus spat back. James felt a weight in the bottom of his stomach, twisting and uncomfortable and unfamiliar at the sight of Mary and Severus talking like close friends. Jealousy? James prided himself on never being a jealous person, and he wasn’t about to start getting jealous over Severus and Mary’s previous connection. Even still, it didn’t feel like it was Severus he was jealous of, that didn’t sit right.

“Well now that I’ve got you back here safely, I should head back to my own dormitory before curfew. I’ll see you around James,” Severus nodded to his new friend. He also waved at Lily before he departed for the Slytherin common room.

Mary gave James a final peck and spared a glance at Lily before she went back inside the common room and made her way to her dorm. James watched Severus turn the corner towards the Slytherin quarters before following the other four through the portrait.

“Man, I can’t *believe* you! You’re on first-name basis with that git now? What even happened?” Sirius wasn’t angry or upset, he was just baffled.

“Oh shut up, Sirius. If you haven’t noticed, you’re the only one present who isn’t on a ‘first name basis’ with Severus, as you so put it. He’s really matured over the past year,” Remus defended, scowling at Sirius. He, just like Sirius, wasn’t mad either, it was just out of place for James.

“But- but I-,” Sirius stammered, not used to Remus disagreeing with him.

Meanwhile, Lily rounded on James, ignoring the teasing flirting between the other two.

“I can’t believe you two were drinking together! You could get expelled for that you know,” Lily chastised.

“Yeah, but Lily, I’m still here, aren’t I?” James teased as he flopped into the couch by the fireplace. Lily sat beside him, her hair glowing in the red light.

“What happened? The James I knew wouldn’t even touch Severus, let alone lean on him because he can hardly walk,” Lily whispered. James looked more serious after her question.

“I saw him in a different light tonight, it was a completely different side of him,” James explained, his gaze fixed on the flickering flames. Lily nodded, prompting him to continue.

“I don’t know what it is, but I can see myself being friends with him. I want to be friends with him,” James confessed. He barely had a filter at this point.

“Then be his friend then. From what I saw, he’s completely unfazed by it, what’s holding you back?” Lily questioned, tilting her head. James turned to meet her green eyes before jerking his head towards Remus and Sirius.

“In case you haven’t noticed, James, but Remus hardly cares. And if it’s Sirius you’re worried about, I’m sure he’ll hardly notice. I think we can both agree he’s got his own issues to work through at the moment,” Lily said.

They both looked over the back of the couch to see Remus holding Sirius in a playful headlock.



Sirius grinned and laughed as he tried to tickle Remus into releasing his head, so far it was unsuccessful. A heavy red blush covered Sirius' entire face. James and Lily sank back down into the couch and faced the fire again.

"You're right, Merlin knows when those two are going to sort their shit out," James laughed.

---

Two weeks later found Severus and James the talk of the year level. James was the most popular guy in their year, so naturally everyone knew about his long standing rivalry with Severus. Severus, for the first time ever, became an object of envy. A lot of girls had been trying to get close to James for years, and Severus managed to do it practically overnight.

Thursday morning found the duo and Mary in the library together. Severus had succumbed to Mary's constant pestering for him to help her with her DADA work again this year. James was also there studying, he found it easy to study when he was with Severus. He wouldn't admit it to anyone, but that strange uneasy feeling returned to him anytime Severus and Mary were together. He didn't even know why he was feeling like that in the first place.

"You know when Mulciber discovered his half empty bottle of Firewhiskey he blamed it on the house elves? He thought they drank it when they did a routine sweep of the dorms," Severus said, flipping the page of his DADA book.

"Wait, you're kidding me, right?" James asked, looking up from his notes for the first time in several minutes.

"I couldn't make up something like that if I tried," Severus replied with a grin. The two chuckle while Mary looked at the two sitting side by side.

"You are single-handedly holding up the intelligence of Slytherin," James praised as he returned his attention to his notes.

"You know, I always knew you two were going to fall in love," Mary mused, leaning her elbow on the table and resting her chin in her palm. James and Severus shared a puzzled look before she continued, "What? The Quidditch darling and the brooding genius, people would pay to see it. If you two ever decide to hookup, don't forget to include me," Mary finished with a wink. Severus grimaced, he couldn't tell if she was being serious or not. Meanwhile James unabashedly laughed in her face.

"Sev?" The voice of Lily Evans sounded from behind his back. Severus swivelled around to face her.

"Hi Lily," James stopped laughing to wave at her. She raised her hand at him in return.

"Sev, can I talk to you? *Alone?*" Lily made a point by eyeing the present company. Severus shut his books and followed her out of the library. On his way out, he could hear James and Mary's back and forth.

"That's never going to happen."

"What, you two hooking up?"

"No, me inviting you if we do hookup," James teased.

Lily lead Severus around to an alcove outside the library. She leaned against the stone wall and faced Severus, her red hair flowing over her shoulders.

“So, what’s going on with you and James? I feel like I haven’t spoken to you in ages, you’re with him all the time now,” Lily asked, a little downtrodden. Severus’ face fell.

“Oh, Lily, I’m so sorry. These past two weeks have gone past so quickly, it’s hard to keep up with everything. It’s all so...new to me,” Severus explained, sheepishly running a hand through his black hair. Lily must have found what he just said funny because she let out a short giggle.

“What?” Severus asked.

“You’re already picking up James’ traits, he’s always got a hand in his hair,” Lily pointed out, causing Severus to stuff his hands into his pockets.

“You only know that because you spend half your time staring at him!” Severus teased with a smirk. Lily scowled at him before laughing along.

“Ok, maybe that’s true, but you can’t blame me for looking at him all the time,” Lily shrugged.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, he’s hot,” Lily answered. Hot? Sure, Severus had noticed that James has a fairly symmetrical and proportional face, but hot?

“I’ll never understand you Lily,” Severus sighed.

“Oh come on! The rest of the female population would agree with me!” Lily argued.

“Is there anything else you wanted to talk about, besides James Potter’s apparent attractiveness?” Severus sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. Lily became serious again.

“Yeah, I wanted to tell you what James told me two weeks ago. He said that he saw you in a different light and wanted to put the past behind him. He sounded really desperate to befriend you,” Lily explained.

“Oh,” Severus muttered, “good. That erases any doubts about this just being part of some prank. If this was all seriously just a joke, I don’t think I’d be able to take it,” Severus spoke truthfully, and Lily nodded. Severus had never known Lily to be a liar, it was reassuring to know that James was being serious.

“Do you want to head back?” Lily asked. “I’d love to join the two of you.”

“Don’t you mean three?”

“No, I don’t count Mary anymore. Do you see the way she glares at me whenever I’m around James? It’s like she doesn’t trust me, and I don’t care how much I like him, I wouldn’t make a move on him. Before everything else, he’s my friend,” Lily said, eyebrows furrowed. Severus thought of how James referred to Lily as a sister, he didn’t have the heart to tell her. They made their way back towards the library.

“Well, I shouldn’t be telling you this, but in detention James said that he doesn’t feel completely right being with Mary. That means maybe you won’t have to see her around James so often in the future,” Severus replied. Lily hit his arm with the back of her hand and scoffed.

“Oh please Sev, it’s not like I want them to break up! Besides, they seem perfectly happy together if you ask me,” Lily replied.

“But haven’t you noticed that Black and Lupin seem to disapprove of her too?” Severus queried. Lily stopped to think for a moment.

“Well, kind of. When they first got together, Mary tended to push those two away so she had James’ undivided attention. She doesn’t do it as much anymore, but Sirius and Remus haven’t forgotten,” Lily answered.

They entered the library and made their way to the back where Mary and James had quietly gone back to their own studying. James noticed their presence from across the room. He winked at Lily, and then shifted his attention to Severus. His expression softened and he grinned at him.

“He doesn’t even smile that brightly at Mary, I’m so jealous of you Sev,” Lily complained softly.

“If you refer to his smile as ‘bright’ one more time, I’ll never speak to you again,” Severus threatened, but Lily saw right through it.

“No you won’t, I know you can see it too. The ‘H’ word,” she teased.

“What?”

“Hot,” Lily whispered back. Severus rolled his eyes at her before they reached the table. Mary had jumped into Severus’ spot besides James, so he sat next to Lily, opposite the couple. They all continued their homework as Lily pulled her books out of her bag. Severus took the opportunity to observe James through lowered lashes.

He was classically handsome, sure, complete with an athletic frame from years of Quidditch training. His sun-kissed skin seemed to glow in the morning rays peering in through the windows of the library. His honey coloured eyes were framed by long, dark lashes, and were almond shaped - similar to Lily’s, Severus noted. His thick, wavy brown hair was long enough that he could tie it back if he tried hard enough.

The more Severus looked, the more he noticed. Perfect bone structure; pink, cupid’s bow lips; a straight nose; thick yet nicely shaped eyebrows. When he smiled, a dimple appeared in his right cheek. When it was all put together it was, well, hot. *Hot.*

He was going to kill Lily for putting that idea in his mind.

# Just Call My Name, I'll Be There

## Chapter Summary

Severus disappears, James tries to stay calm but he can't help but worry. Once they are reunited, he wants to find a way to cheer Severus up.

## Chapter Notes

This is a significantly more Marauders-centric chapter, hope you like it :D

Chapter title is from I'll Be There by The Jackson 5

Autumn turned to winter as December rolled around. The cold air nipped at James' skin and ruffled his hair, not that he minded that second part. What he hated was the drop in temperature caused his glasses frame to numb his skin when he put them on in the morning.

"Prongs!" James turned over just in time for a pillow to land on his face, hard. It was Sirius, already in his uniform. Monday morning had come around as quickly as it left.

"Get up already, Moony left without us for breakfast," Sirius informed, tightening the tie around his neck as he spoke. James flipped onto his back with a huff. He didn't want to face the cold day yet, he wanted to savour the warmth of his bed for a few more minutes.

"Seriously Prongs, if you don't get up now I'll block off the entrance to the Shrieking Shack so you can't get in on Thursday night," Sirius threatened. James knew he wasn't serious, Remus would sooner transform in their dorm than let that happen, but the tone in Sirius' voice was enough to startle James out of bed.

Shortly after, James and Sirius entered the great hall and made a beeline to where Remus was sitting with Lily. He was drinking from a cup of tea when he spotted the other Marauders. Remus gave them a quick wave and placed the cup back on the table.

"Took you two long enough, did you encounter a troll on the way here or something?" Remus asked as the two sat down on the opposite side.

"Oh please," Lily piped up, "James' bed hair is worse than usual, that can only mean that he overslept and Sirius had to drag him down here." Sirius laughed and slapped the table.

"She's got you there, mate," Sirius teased.

"So what you're saying Evans is that you're looking at my hair long enough to notice if it's any worse than usual?" James smirked.

"What? No- I-," Lily stammered, cheeks heating up to match her hair, "you arrogant-".

"Leave her alone Prongs, you've got your own missus to worry about. I don't think she's too happy

that you've been spending all your time with a certain Slytherin rather than her lately," Remus chastised. At this point, everyone else was used to James seeking out Severus in his spare time, but that meant James wasn't seeing Mary as much as he used to.

At the mention of the Slytherin boy, James cast his eyes to the table on the far side of the room. He scoured the length of the table, looking for a familiar head of black hair, but he was unable to find it.

"I spend as much time with him as I do with you lot. If she's really that upset, she'd come speak to me about it," James said, but his focus wasn't on the conversation anymore. It wasn't the first time Severus had been absent from breakfast, but James had grown to like their morning greetings over the length of the Great Hall. James was sure he'd see him in their shared Potions class after lunch.

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Tuesday morning was almost exactly the same as Monday, except James got out of bed at the right time so he wouldn't miss Severus if he decided to show up to breakfast. Yesterday, he had been mysteriously absent from all the classes he shared with James.

When James asked Lily if she knew where he was, she didn't know either. He wasn't in the hospital wing, and he wasn't holed up somewhere in the Slytherin quarters, so James was out of ideas. It wasn't like Severus to disappear off the face of the Earth with no clue of his whereabouts.

As Tuesday dragged past in a blur of essays and assignments and NEWT preparation, not once did Severus show his face. Sirius was trying to take his mind off it.

"Don't worry about him, have you forgotten what Thursday night is? You're prepared for it, right?" Sirius asked in a hushed voice in the back of their Charms class.

"Of course Padfoot, who do you take me for?" James replied calmly.

---

Wednesday came and went with no sign of Severus. James could hardly focus on his absurd disappearance though; Remus was looking worse for wear, his transformation was 24 hours away. Sirius never left Remus' side when this time of the month came around. It's when he's the most serious, and if it wasn't for such a grave reason, James would say this side of Sirius is one he should show more often.

Once Sirius was in the mood to joke around again, James would have to tell him how whipped he looked for the slender werewolf.

"James, aren't you forgetting something?" Mary asked, bringing James back to the present. She was standing still, hands on her hips, it looked like she was expecting something.

"Oh, um, right," James fished a small, empty ink pot from his book bag and placed it in Mary's hand, "sorry that I didn't return it earlier, I've got some new, unbroken ones now. Anyways, I really have to go, I promised Remus that I'd meet him." James passed her and headed up to the shared dorm.

"James! Wait! That's not what I meant!" Mary shouted out after him, but he could no longer hear her.

---

James was too preoccupied on Thursday to worry about Severus. He had reached Sirius' level of mother-henning, to Remus' dismay.

“Seriously, I don’t know how many times I have to tell you two that I only need your help at night,” Remus sighed. He was propped up in his four poster bed by an extra pillow, willingly donated by Sirius.

“Dear sweet Moony, who else would cure your boredom if we weren’t around?” Sirius asked, sitting on the end of his bed with a hand casually resting on Remus’ knee.

“I’m a teenage boy, I’m sure I’ll find a way,” Remus retorted. Sirius retracted his hand like he’d been burned, while James laughed harder than he had all week.

"I don't know how the professors all claim you're the innocent one, Moony. You're worse than us sometimes," James said.

Several hours later, just as the sun was setting, they made their way to the Shrieking Shack, and James and Sirius transformed before the moon rose.

---

Friday morning found Lupin in his usual spot in the hospital wing, and there was still no sign of Severus. James bargained with himself: if he hadn’t heard anything from Severus by that night, he was going to see Dumbledore the following morning.

It turns out that seeing Dumbledore wouldn’t be necessary. Lily approached James in the late afternoon, clutching a letter. He was with Mary, and she didn’t seem too thrilled when Lily asked to speak to James alone.

“I had to talk to you, sorry for pulling you away from Mary,” she brandished the letter, “this is from Sev. He’s ok.” James’ eyes widen and his heart thudded suddenly.

“Is he ok? Is he safe?” James rushed out, moving to snatch the letter from Lily. She anticipated his movements and held it out of his reach.

“Ah! That’s private. He’s ok, or rather, he will be,” Lily explained. She saw the disappointment in James’ face that he wasn’t allowed to know what happened.

“Hey, I’m sure he has a reason for not telling you just yet. It says here that he’ll be back tomorrow night,” Lily reached forward and rubbed James’ arm before she left.

James really tried not to feel hurt. Severus and Lily had known each other for a decade, it’s normal that he would send her an owl first. Merlin, this wasn’t even about him, something terrible had obviously happened to his friend and all he could worry about was his pride.

---

Around breakfast on Saturday, James and Sirius helped Remus limp back up to the Gryffindor tower. This transformation hadn’t been as taxing on his body as normal, so Madame Pomfrey lets him go early. Remus was just tired now, so he spent the day underneath a multitude of blankets Sirius threw on him.

“If you add anymore I’ll suffocate!” Remus warned. He then forced the two down to breakfast so they didn’t go starving half the day.

“I think Moony will catch on soon enough if you don’t leave him alone,” James teased, elbowing Sirius in the side. Sirius coughed and tucked a loose, dark curl behind his ear.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” he asserted. They had made it to the Great Hall just in time for the post. Before they even reached the Gryffindor table, a letter fell for James, hitting his

shoulder on its way to the floor. He picked it up and immediately recognised the cursive scrawl.

“It’s from Severus,” James mumbled.

“Ah, so the bastard decided to let you know that he’s still alive?” Sirius scoffed.

“Hey, don’t-,”

“-call him a bastard, I know. I’m still getting used to the whole...you two being good friends thing,” Sirius defended. “Besides, if you’ve come around to him after hating him for all these years, then he mustn’t be as bad as he used to be.” James supposed his reasoning was better than Sirius outright hating him like he used to.

“Padfoot, one day you’ll become friends with Severus, and you’ll be kicking yourself like I did,” James stated. Sirius didn’t bother defending himself more than a cheeky eye-roll, it’s clear that James’ mind was already made up. One thing Sirius has grown to love and hate about James is his stubbornness.

James ripped open the envelop and tried his best to keep Sirius from reading over his shoulder.

*“James,*

*I’m sorry that I haven’t been able to contact you this past week. I’m ok, but something happened. If you’re free tonight, could you meet me in the Room of Requirement?*

*Sincerely,*

*Severus Snape.”*

James carefully folded the letter and placed it in his pocket.

“Well he’s concise, I’ll give him that,” Sirius noted, and that coaxed a small smile from James.

---

James paced the seventh floor. Back and forth and back and forth and back and forth. His thoughts couldn’t be any louder if he tried.

*‘I need a place to find Severus Snape’.*

He was almost nervous to speak to Severus, a feeling he wasn’t well acquainted with. What if he didn’t want to speak to James anymore? No, this was irrational, James could get past this.

The door for the room appeared and James all but raced inside. Inside, there was a roaring fireplace a few chairs and tables, and a couch. Rows of books lined the walls, and the room seemed to glow a dim red hue. It reminded James of the Gryffindor common room a bit. Curiously enough, there was an abundance of bedding strewn around the room, such as pillows and blankets.

Severus was by the fire, sitting cross legged on the Kashan rug and prodding at the logs with a poker. He didn’t seem to notice that James had entered. James clear his throat.

“Long time, no see,” he spoke. Severus whipped around to face him. He dropped the poker on the tiles and stood to face James. Even from a distance, he looked like he’d been crying. James’ face fell and he immediately rushed over to Severus’ spot by the fire.

Without even thinking about it, he enveloped Severus in a hug. One of James’ hands found its way to Severus’ back and the other rested on the back of his head, guiding Severus into James’

shoulder. As James threaded his fingers soothingly through the other's hair, he realised how soft it was.

Severus wrapped his thin arms around James' torso and buried his face into his neck. They stood in front of the flames, breathing deeply, bathing in the heat. Neither of them moved, except for James' hand running itself through Severus' surprisingly thick, shoulder-length hair.

"What happened?" James whispered, eyes on the flickering fire. Severus pulled away from James and sank back down into his cross-legged position on the floor. He leaned back against couch behind him, head resting on the cushion and eyes staring blankly at the roof.

"My father died on Monday," Severus said softly. He looked over to James, but the other sank to the floor beside him.

"Severus, I'm so sorry," James said. He went to rest a hand on Severus' shoulder, but stopped, he didn't want to seem patronising. To his surprise, Severus scoffed.

"Don't be sorry, he was an asshole. I mean, he was my father, but he made my mother's life a living hell while she was still alive," Severus sighed, "after she passed, he just got worse. Dumbledore came and found me early Monday morning, it turns out it was the booze that got him in the end. Not a surprise."

Severus paused for a minute, trying to plan what to say next.

"The funeral was on Friday, and I had the absolute pleasure of reconnecting with the muggle half of my family on the days between. They're just as horrible as he was, they think I've been living at some boarding school for teenager delinquents and were treating me as such." Severus uncrossed his legs and turned to face James.

"Thursday was the worst day. A solicitor came to discuss his will, seeing that I'm listed as the next of kin, and-" Severus drew in a ragged breath, "it turns out that he accumulated a massive amount of debt when he was alive. There's no one who can afford to pay it back in the family, so they're repossessing the house." Severus let out a bitter laugh, "It's funny really, he still finds a way to be a problem in death."

"Wait, so that means that after school-,"

"I'll be homeless? Virtually, yes," Severus answered quickly. He shook his head and rested a hand on the back of his neck. "I don't know anyone from the Prince line, my mother was disowned when she married my father, and I'd rather be homeless than live with his side of the family. There's nowhere for me to go."

James in that moment felt completely and utterly useless. There was almost nothing he could say to change the situation at hand. Well there was one thing, but it was drastic. Screw it, he thought.

"I'll pay for the house," James burst out. Severus raised an eyebrow and went to refuse, but James continued, "seriously, I will. The Potter fortune is large enough to buy it fifty times over."

"Please, you're just saying that," Severus scoffed.

"No, seriously. I'll swear to it if you don't believe me. I don't want to see you go without a place to live just because of your father," James reassured. Severus studied him, it didn't seem like James was bluffing.

"I can't let you do that. Besides, I don't want to go back there anyways, there are too many bad



memories associated with that house,” Severus declined.

“What can I do you help you then? I feel a bit useless,” James asked.

“What do you mean? Just keep me company,” Severus playfully hit his forearm, “I asked you here tonight for a reason. Besides Lily, you’re the closest friend I have now,” Severus confessed. James tried to think of a way to cheer him up for a minute.

“Don’t worry, I’ve got just the thing, trust me you’ll love it,” James grinned as he rose to his feet.

---

“I knew I shouldn’t have trusted you. I think you meant to say that you’ll love this, not me,” Severus groaned as he eyed what James had spent the past ten minutes building. He’d used the various pillows and blankets around the room to assemble a pillow fort, which he was now inside. Severus stood at the foot of the fort.

“What do you mean? Don’t tell me you’re too good to enjoy a pillow fort?” James teased. The Gryffindor used to love building them when he was younger, however the Slytherin never got to make once in his youth.

“No, what I mean is that you look like an idiot right now. There’s no way I’m getting in that unstable mess,” Severus retorted, his arms crossed.

“Come on Severus,” James drawled, “get in here right now.”

“Make me,” he shot back. James surged forward and wrapped his arms around his legs, pulling him down and into the structure. “Get off me you git!” Severus threatened, desperately trying to free himself from James’ grip. James only let go of him when he was inside and there was no chance of his escaping.

“See, it’s not so bad in here right? The Room of Requirement knew that we’d need a load of pillows, that’s why they were sprawled out everywhere,” James mused, flopping onto his back and looking at the blankets overhead. Severus eventually laid down next to him and sighed.

“It’s...better than I expected. I have to applaud your craftsmanship,” Severus replied. “What do we do now?”

“Anything really. We could gossip, I know how much you love doing that,” James suggested sarcastically.

“Oh you know me too well,” Severus went along with it. However, something did come to mind that he wanted to ask James about.

“Can I ask you something now that you’ve brought up gossip?” Severus asked. James nodded expectedly. “It’s about Black and Lupin. What’s...going on there?” Severus asked cautiously.

“If I knew I would tell you, but it’s obvious how hard poor Sirius is pining,” James laughed. Severus joined in too.

“Speaking of Sirius, I think he’s finally warming up to you. I mean, as much as Sirius is willing to warm up to you before I force him to,” James explained.

“He has no reason to like me though, you don’t have to force him to befriend me. If anything, that’ll make him dislike me even more,” Severus replied.

“Well if that’s the case, it’ll be his loss. You’re fantastic and you deserved to be liked,” James mused in a rare serious moment, but that smirk soon returned to his face. “Although, that goes the opposite way too, I can see you and Sirius being quite the duo if you both let your past animosities die.”

“Fine, I’ll try then, but I’m only doing this for you,” Severus warned. James laughed at how annoyed he looked. They lapsed into a comfortable silence before Severus spoke up.

“Thank you for building this stupid fort to take my mind off everything that’s going on,” he said quietly.

“We can stay in here forever if you want, it’s cozy enough. We could grow old in here, get a couple of cats, pee in a bucket,” James suggested with a smile. Severus whacked his arm to shut him up and laughed. James watched Severus out of the corner of his eye, he seemed to be fighting against what he wanted to say. He finally cleared his throat and inhaled.

“Hey James?” Severus paused. “This might sound lame, but I think you’re my new favourite person,” he confessed softly.

“Really?” James asked, taken aback. He propped himself up on his left elbow to look at Severus properly. Severus looked over to meet James’ eyes.

“Yeah, really,” Severus let out a nervous laugh, “is that tragic since we hated each other until recently?” James carefully thought about what to say.

“I don’t think so, you’re my new favourite person too,” James replied, “just don’t tell Sirius because he will kill you.”

“Ok, I won’t.” The two laughed together.

“Hey, come stay with me over the Christmas break,” James suddenly proposed. “Sirius has been living with me since our sixth year, and Remus is coming to stay with us for the holidays too. It’ll be fun.”

“I guess so, sure,” Severus replied. James grinned.

“Heads up though, you’ll have to share a room with me. That is, unless you want to stay in the bigger guest room with Sirius and Remus, but something’s telling me you wouldn’t like that,” James said.

“You’re right,” Severus cursed the blush that rose to his pale cheeks at the implication. James, however, couldn’t stop staring at the faint pink dusting his friend’s cheekbones. That weird feeling in his stomach returned for the millionth time that evening.

# I Just Wanna Make You Feel Ok

## Chapter Summary

Severus stays with James, Sirius, and Remus over the Christmas holidays. Domesticity ensues.

## Chapter Notes

This is definitely a more relaxed chapter, but don't worry, everything goes to shit soon :)

Chapter title from Wish You Were Gay by Billie Eilish

After travelling on the Hogwarts Express for half the day, Severus was happy to see Platform 9 and 3/4. Night had already fallen by this point, and the four boys had long since changed back into muggle clothing. A short witch with greying hair waved to them as the train pulled up to the platform. Severus assumed it was James' mother.

The four collected their luggage and swiftly exited the train. They weaved through the crowd of students and parents to reach Mrs Potter, who was near the entrance of the platform. They wasted no time on pleasantries, Mrs Potter instructed them to follow her straight to the awaiting portkey before the traffic got unbearable.

The quintet found their way into a London alleyway and grabbed the portkey disguised as an old soup can. In a matter of seconds, they found themselves on the front lawn of a moderately sized, double-story house. Hedges lined the iron fences, and a large apple tree was growing in the centre of the garden. Severus couldn't observe much more than that as he was quickly ushered inside.

By this point it was already late, so Mrs Potter retired to her room. Sirius showed Remus to their room, although Remus didn't look like he needed to be shown around, and James guided Severus to his room.

It was quite a cozy room, a desk with an overhead bookshelf was pressed up against the left wall, and behind that was a window which opened to the roof. A king bed lay in the centre of the room, and the closet and door to the ensuite lined the right wall.

Severus watched as James dragged his trunk over to the right side of the bed and bend down on his knees to push it underneath his bed. That word 'hot' ran through Severus' mind again, it was happening more often than he cared to admit.

"You don't mind if I go take a shower right? I'll be back in a few minutes," James stated as he grabbed a change of clothes and left for the ensuite.

Severus flopped onto the bed, resting his hands behind his head. He supposed sharing a bed with James was better than rooming with Sirius and Remus, but he still preferred his privacy. After

lying still for a few minutes, Severus sat back up and pulled his trunk onto the bed. He fished out a pair of loose fitting, black sweatpants and a black t-shirt to change into after James was finished in the shower.

No sooner had he shoved his trunk back under his bed had James emerged from behind the door. He was towelling his hair dry and wore nothing besides a pair of dark grey sweatpants.

“Sorry, I’d put a shirt on but I run hot when I sleep, apologies in advance,” James said as he gave up on drying his hair. “Besides, it’s nothing you haven’t seen before, right?”

Severus eyed James’ physique once more before answering, “Right.”

“Why did you invite me to stay with you over Mary?” Severus asked after James returned from hanging up his towel to dry.

“Mary goes home to her family on the holidays. Besides, my mum would never allow a girl to stay up here with me, doesn’t matter what my relationship is with her,” James answered. He then turned to Severus and said with a perfect smile, “That’s not to say I don’t want you here of course. I know Sirius was happy to hear that you were coming with us for the break over Mary, and that’s saying something.” The two chuckled together.

“Do you mind if I just-” Severus gestured towards the shower as he collected his belongings.

“Yeah, go ahead, feel free to use anything you want in there as well,” James said idly. He had picked up his copy of *A Guide To Advanced Transfiguration* and started flicking through it.

Severus locked the door behind him and turned the silver taps on. He was surprised to find that the assortment of shower gels and washes were lavender scented, not that Severus disliked lavender. He hadn’t expected James to go for a floral scent. Regardless, Severus used what was there and let the hot water nearly burn his skin away.

Severus finished and dried himself and his hair as best as he could before dressing and going back out to James. James looked over the top of his book as the door closed.

“Monochrome, what a classic choice. Even your hair matches,” James nodded towards his outfit and still-damp tresses.

“Are you seventeen yet?” Severus asked. James raised an eyebrow.

“No, why?”

“I was going to ask you to use a drying charm on my hair, I can’t stand it like this, but never mind,” Severus explained as he lay down besides James. “And don’t pick on my outfit when you’re not even wearing a shirt.”

“Hey! I wasn’t picking on it, I was being genuine. Black is your colour,” James defended, placing his book down on his bedside table. He took his glasses off and placed them on top of the book.

“Black is everyones colour,” Severus retorted. James couldn’t argue with that.

“You don’t have any weird sleeping habits I should worry about, right?” James asked as he turned off the light and got under the covers. Severus joined him, sticking to the opposite side of the king bed.

“Other than sudden sleep strangulation? Not that I’m aware of,” Severus teased.

"I'll believe it when I see it, I guess," James stated. Severus swore he could already feel how warm James was going to get. They bid each other goodnight, but Severus lay awake, staring at the roof for another half an hour. Eventually James' soft breathing and the weight on his eyelids lulled him into a deep sleep.

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Severus woke slowly. Sunlight streamed into the room through the sheer curtains, illuminating the room in a soft light. He felt warm. He then noticed the weight of an arm around his waist and the muscular body pressing up against his back. His first instinct was to panic, but the last thing he wanted to do right now was wake James and have him notice the position they're in. Severus tried to slowly move out of his hold, but the firm grip around his waist wasn't budging.

After lying still for another moment, Severus realised he didn't exactly want to move. It was nice to be held, even if it was by his overheating, sweaty friend. Severus couldn't remember the last time he was this physical with someone. He wasn't sure if he ever had been. Severus lay there for several minutes with James holding him flush against his chest until the Gryffindor began to rouse from his sleep.

James suddenly jerked awake. He quickly realised he had pulled Severus tight against him at some point during the night. His face was buried in his neck and James couldn't help but notice the smell of lavender that clung to his hair and skin. It was comforting.

James slowly tried to pull away from the slighter man; he didn't want Severus to wake up to James spooning him. Once James props himself up on an elbow and goes to sit up, Severus turns to face him.

"Don't leave, you're so goddamn warm. You really weren't lying when you said you run hot," Severus said, his baritone voice lower than usual. James smiled down at him and ran a hand through his hair, trying to make it look a bit more natural.

"I would stay, but I'm starving," James replied. He swung his legs over the side of the bed and stretched his arms above his head. Severus didn't know why he couldn't pull his eyes away from his muscles tensing in his back.

About ten minutes later, Severus was seated at the dining room table while James fried up some bacon for the four of them. James plated up the food just as Sirius and Remus joined them, the latter of which looked like he got no sleep.

"Severus, James, can I switch rooms with one of you? It's damn near impossible to sleep next to Sirius when he elbows you in the face every time he turns over," Remus growled.

"You make a compelling argument. However, I am going to respectfully decline," Severus said.

"Smart decision, who would willingly give up sleeping next to that hunk over there? Meow!" Sirius elbowed James before shoving him out of the kitchen to the table where the other two sat. Sirius took over from what James was doing; plating the food and bringing it over to the wooden table.

"Can it, Pads. I always knew you were jealous of my devastating good looks," James retorted.

"Are you kidding me? Are you forgetting that I'm a beater? Everyone knows that the beaters are always hotter than the chasers," Sirius replied, taking a bite of his toast.

"Yeah, sorry James, Sirius is right on that one," Remus agreed, much to James' dismay. Sirius eyed Remus, clearly not missing the implications of what he said.

“Well at least Severus is on my side, right?” James turned towards Severus and waited for him to back him up. He was leaning forward on the table, chin propped up by his hand. Severus couldn’t help but glance at his bicep, and there was that word ‘*hot*’ again.

Thankfully, Severus never had to give his answer: James’ mother entered the kitchen.

“Merlin, James, put a shirt on when we have guests around,” she scowled. She made her way to the kettle to make some tea. As the kettle boiled, she turned around to eye the one guest she didn’t exactly know.

“So, Severus, that’s a rather unusual name. I don’t really know that much about you, unlike Sirius and Remus, is there a girl in your life then?” Mrs Potter asked. James nearly choked on his piece of bacon at the icebreaker his mother had chosen. Of all the things to ask someone when you’ve just met them...

“Oh, erm, no,” Severus stuttered, rather bashful that she outright asked him that. He thought about what she meant when she said that she didn’t really know anything about him. Had James really never brought up the guy he’s hated the most at Hogwarts for the past six years to his mother before? Apparently not.

“Yeah, but we all saw the way you used to follow Lily around,” Sirius teased.

“Please, we’re just friends,” Severus defended. Mrs Potter had ignored Sirius’ comment.

“Snape, that name sounds familiar. I think I’ve heard it before, but I don’t know where,” Mrs Potter wondered aloud.

“My mother’s Eileen Prince, if that helps,” Severus offered. Mrs Potter’s eyes lit up.

“Oh! A Prince! Of course, that’s a name I haven’t heard in a while. So you’re Eileen’s boy Severus then. She used to be quite the Gobstones player in her youth, if I remember correctly,” Mrs Potter mused.

“Wait, you were friends with Severus’ mum?” James asked.

“I mean, we were only acquaintances, she was more a friend of a friend. Very sad how her parents treated her after she ran away with your father, if you don’t mind me saying. I don’t think I’ve heard from her in, what, over a decade now, how is she these days?” Mrs Potter asked. Severus was afraid that question would come up.

“Oh...she passed away last year,” Severus answered softly. Mrs Potter’s face fell.

“Oh dear, I’m so sorry to hear that. At least she lives on through you dear, you resemble her quite a bit.” The four returned to their breakfast as Mrs Potter left the room in an awkward silence, her cup of tea cradled in her hands.

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Christmas Day was a small affair. James sent a letter to Mary early in the morning, and received one back just after lunch. It was good to hear from her, Mary really looked after James. It was nice to know that she truly cared about him and wasn’t just using him for her own image, like other girls had done to James in the past.

It was late in the afternoon when James brought a picnic basket up to his room. A tartan blanket was rolled up under his arm too. Severus sat in the middle of the bed, stroking the Potter’s black cat, Sylvia. James almost dropped the basket at the sight.

“How did you do that? She hates everyone outside of the family,” James said.

“I don’t know, but she’s purring,” Severus answered quietly, not wanting to disturb the cat.

“She seems to like you, that’s saying something,” James said as he made his way over to the window. He opened it and stepped through onto the roof, taking the blanket and basket with him. Severus watched the scene unfold, wondering what he was doing.

“Where are you going with that?” Severus asked.

“Come out and I’ll show you,” James smiled back. Severus left Sylvia lying in the middle of the bed before cautiously climbing through the window himself. The roof was fairly flat and gave a nice view out over the rest of the town and the hillside. The sun was low, turning the sky a brilliant pink colour.

James spread the blanket out over the roof tiling and sat down, facing towards the setting sun. He was already going through the basket, pulling out grapes, cheese, crackers, and some leftovers from lunch.

“You really went to the trouble of finding a picnic basket for this?” Severus asked, still standing by the open window. James pat the spot next to him, telling Severus to sit down. He got the hint and joined his friend on the blanket.

“You didn’t think I’d go all out for this?” James replied as he picked up a grape.

“True, but why bother at all?”

“What do you mean, Sev? This is the best time of the day, and to be sitting up here with some food, some good company, and a great view is the perfect way to spend Christmas evening,” James replied.

“Don’t call me Sev, only Lily calls me that,” Severus complained.

“Make me,” James shot back quickly. Severus picked up a grape and pelted it at James’ head. It exploded and disappeared from their sight.

“Hey!” James cried out. He picked a grape and went to throw it back to Severus, but he held his hands up.

“Fine! Ok! Use the damn nickname, just don’t give me a grape-sized bruise on my cheek,” Severus said. James tried to stop the laughter that followed his statement. Soon enough, Severus was chuckling along with him. It quickly dissolved into the pair laughing about nothing in particular. James couldn’t help but notice how Severus’ whole face lit up when he laughed. Severus tilted his head back when he laughed, exposing the long line of his neck.

James wouldn’t describe Severus as classically handsome, but there was an element of unconventionality that made him attractive in his own right. He had certainly grown into his nose over the years, and his skin and hair had lost its greasy appearance that was present in his youth; it looked rather healthy these days. Severus had always been thin, but as he grew taller and matured he looked graceful instead of awkward. His long lashes and delicate, rosy lips added to the grace his body held. And Merlin his *voice*- James would never shut up if he sounded like that.

“So that’s where you two are, thanks for the invite,” Sirius said as he climbed through the window. Remus followed directly after him. James jumped a little, he was so lost in his thoughts that he didn’t notice the presence of the other Marauders until they spoke up.

“He’s only kidding, we didn’t want to interrupt your date, but this looks like fun,” Remus explained. Sirius leaned over James to grab a turkey sandwich straight out of the basket.

“And you’ve been hoarding all the food up here too! Shame on you, James,” Sirius scolded and took a bite from his sandwich.

“It was peaceful until you two gatecrashed, but seeing that you’re here now you can help us finish the food,” James said.

Suddenly, James realised this was the perfect opportunity to make Sirius and Severus talk to each other. It was peaceful and no one was in a hostile mood, James couldn’t see another moment like this coming up again. He didn’t want to spend the rest of the holidays torn between two of his closest friends. He just needed to get them alone.

“Hey Moony, while it’s on my mind, can you come with me for a moment? I found something in mum’s collection of herbs that’s supposed to help with pain around...” James trailed off and gave Remus a knowing look. He got the hint and nodded back.

“Sure, best make it quick though, I want to be back up here to see the sunset,” Remus replied.

They disappeared through the window, leaving Sirius and Severus sitting on opposite ends of the blanket. The two sat in silence for a moment or so before Sirius spoke up.

“Listen, I- you’re not as bad as I thought you were,” Sirius started.

“How eloquent,” Severus mocked.

“Shut up, I’m trying to be sincere. You’ve been alright this trip, and I can see why James and Remus have warmed up to you,” Sirius finished.

“Likewise,” Severus gave Sirius a small nod before his smirk came back, “although, am I correct in assuming that you want Remus to be more than warm to you?” Sirius turned a brilliant red.

“Not you as well, I knew that James has been filling your head with rot about me,” Sirius moaned.

“He hasn’t been, I noticed it myself,” Severus teased. He laughed at Sirius’ crestfallen face.

“Is this how we’re destined to be then? You and I taking the piss out of each other, no matter the circumstances?” Sirius asked, reclining on his elbows. Severus noticed how Sirius avoided the question.

“At least we can hold a conversation now without hexing each other. After six years it gets a bit tiring, don’t you think?” Severus answered. Sirius nodded in agreement.

“I think we can both agree that there are bigger things to worry about than each other,” Sirius said. Severus knew he was talking about the impending war. For the most part, Severus had tried to stay out of discussions about it, but with every passing day that was becoming harder to do. It was clear that Dumbledore expected Severus to stay away from his Slytherin housemates and the Death Eaters, and Severus had no qualms doing that. They were an unpleasant bunch of people and they never made Severus’ life easy.

“Yes! We didn’t miss it,” Remus exclaimed as he clambered back through the window, eyes on the horizon. James followed him moments after. Severus silently thanked their arrival, he didn’t want to delve into a discussion of war with Sirius.



James took his place at Severus' side again and the four watched as the Sun disappeared below the horizon. No one spoke as the magenta sky faded to black. Severus watched the colours change and a sense of tranquility washed over him. He would be happy living in this moment forever.

# Put A Knife In My Back, Shot An Arrow At Me

## Chapter Summary

The Marauders + Severus arrive back at Hogwarts. Mary reveals her true colours to Severus, and James faces a tough decision.

## Chapter Notes

Chapter title is from Ghosts by Michael Jackson

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The rest of the holidays passed, and Severus was back at Hogwarts as quickly as he left. He had to get used to sleeping alone again: The lack of warmth from James made the Slytherin quarters seem that much colder. The NEWTs were less than five months away, and that meant that more people were approaching Severus for help. Most of these people usually never gave Severus the time of day, not that he cared. He had a certain reputation for being amongst the highest achievers, and these people always seemed to come out of the woodworks around examination time. In the past, he turned them away, except for Mary in their sixth year.

A large amount of people that were seeking tutoring this year seemed to be girls. Severus mentioned how odd it was to James one day in early January, and all James said was, "Would you rather it be boys then?"

Severus hastily denied.

"I don't know what you've been saying to people," Severus said when he asked James about it again on the first day of February, "but contrary to popular belief, I *don't* want to spend my free time attempting to tutor whoever you send my way."

"In all honesty, it was more Sirius' idea. He said you seemed too caught up in your own work and you needed an outlet. Leave it to him to suggest women as a solution to that," James laughed. Part of James was happy to see that Severus didn't particularly enjoy the company of whichever woman James and Sirius sent his way. He told himself it was because he didn't want to see Severus less than he already did. James gave it no further thought.

Meanwhile, Severus was internally fuming. Leave it to James to use his connections to try to find the Slytherin some "company". Undesired company, mind you. Severus was far too busy with his own studies to worry about Claire in Hufflepuff who still couldn't distinguish between powdered Asphodel root and crushed Iris petals. Not to mention her myriad of friends with similar academic quandaries.

One person who approached Severus was Mary. Of course Severus knew this wasn't some ploy James and Sirius had set up to help him find a girlfriend, or whatever they thought they were doing. She was genuinely hopeless at Defence Against the Dark Arts. Severus was surprised she was accepted at a NEWT level for the class.

"So that's the correct technique for casting nonverbal spells?" Mary asked, looking up from her textbook and meeting Severus' eyes. They were sitting next to each other at a desk in the library. It was mid February, the climate was beginning to warm up into an early Spring.

"That's all there is to it," Severus confirmed. He couldn't believe Mary was still struggling with nonverbal spells. Everyone else had mastered them by the end of their sixth year.

"Thank you for helping me understand how it works better, you must think I'm an idiot," Mary said with a gentle smile. Severus didn't want to be overly rude to her: She was still James' girlfriend, she could easily tell James if Severus was being a git. Nonetheless, Severus silently agreed.

"It's fine, and for what it's worth, James believes in you too. He never shuts up about you when we're together, says you're destined for great things," Severus replied. It wasn't overtly true, but that wasn't to say that James didn't love Mary. He clearly did, Severus just wanted to boost Mary's confidence so she wouldn't seek him out so often.

What he didn't expect was for Mary to slide an arm around his neck and pull him into a kiss. As quickly as it happened, Severus pushed her away and jumped up out of his chair, knocking his books to the floor in the process. His blood ran cold.

"What are you doing?" Severus exclaimed in a hushed voice. He looked around to see if anyone had seen them. Luckily, the library was mostly empty, save for the first years in the next row over. That didn't stop Severus' face from burning though.

"Oh come on, you and I both know there's something between us!" Mary rolled her eyes. She reached out to grab Severus' arm but he batted her hand away.

"Friendship! You're my friend's girlfriend," Severus scowled. He pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed angrily, when had he given her that impression? "Let me clear something up for you: This," Severus gestured to the space between them, "is never going to happen."

Mary stood in a stunned silence for a moment, her eyes trained on his face.

"Now *leave*!" Severus demanded, backing away from Mary. When she didn't move straight away, Severus said, "Go!"

"Fine, make it weird," Mary huffed as she gathered her belongings. She left without looking back, leaving Severus standing there with a hand over his mouth, breathing deeply.

That was not how he expected his first kiss to go.

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"She kissed you?" Lily asked. That certainly explained his jittery movements, Severus was usually so composed.

"Yeah, she started saying all this strange stuff about how there's 'something between us'. I didn't buy it and I still don't, she's up to something," Severus huffed. They were in the courtyard a few hours after the incident in the library. Severus had been pondering over what to do until he decided that he'd need Lily's advice.

"I can't believe she'd do that to James, if I were with him I'd never-"

"Lily," Severus warned.

"Right, not the time. Only trying to ease the tension," Lily explained. Clearly Sirius had been

rubbing off on her too much.

"I don't know what to do," Severus sighed, resting his head in his hands.

"Sev, what do you think you should do?" Lily asked.

"Well, I need to tell James. He shouldn't be with someone who would go behind his back like that. I'm just worried he's going to get the wrong idea and think that I wanted all this to happen," Severus said. Lily rested a hand on his arm and offered him an easy smile.

"Hey, you know James, he's not going to do that. If you're really worried about talking to him, just write it down in a letter," Lily suggested.

So that's what Severus did. The next day, just after their Potions lesson ended, Severus tried to slip the letter into James' book bag without him noticing. He had left his bag unattended in the hallway while he went back into the class to speak to Slughorn. Just as Severus got the zipper open, James came back out of the classroom. He eyed the letter in his hand.

"Did you write me a love note?" James asked with a smile. Now that James had caught him red handed, Severus lost his nerve for telling him what happened.

"Oh, hey James," Severus said and stood back up, the letter still in his hand.

"What is that?" James asked as he picked his bag up off the ground.

"You know what, maybe later-," Severus started, hiding the letter behind his back. James tried to grab it.

"Let me see it," James asked.

"No, it's- it's nothing," Severus really didn't want to be around when James read that letter.

"Give it-"

"It's nothing, it's really nothing," James grabbed it but Severus refused to let go.

"I want to read nothing, I love nothing," James chuckled as he finally snatched the letter from his grasp. He began to read it and his face quickly fell.

"I was going to tell you in person but I couldn't, so I wrote it, obviously," Severus weakly explained as James continued to read the letter. He didn't say anything for a moment.

"You and Mary kissed?" James asked, eyebrows furrowed in confusion.

"No, no, she kissed me," Severus cleared up quickly. James didn't look up from the letter as anger began to mar his face.

"That asshole," James fumed.

"I know," Severus acknowledged. He didn't know what to do. "Do you want to go talk about it?"

James straightened up and his face became unreadable. He folded the letter and put it into his bag.

"Nope," he pursed his lips and looked at Severus, "I just need time to think." James turned to walk away.

"Sorry...I'm not good at this," Severus said. He didn't want James to leave on that note. James turned back around, eyes downcast.

"Yeah," James replied softly. He walked away, leaving Severus standing alone in the cold dungeons.

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Severus didn't see James again until the following day at breakfast. He spotted him across the room in the Great Hall, but when Severus caught his gaze, James pointedly looked away.

Almost half the day had passed without another sign from James. Severus had looked for him all over the castle, but they didn't have a shared class until Transfiguration in the late afternoon. Suddenly, he remembered what James had mentioned the previous week: James organised extra Quidditch training with his team now that the season was heating up.

Severus made his way down to the Quidditch pitch, hoping that he hadn't missed the Gryffindor's midday practice. Sure enough, there he was with his windswept hair and ruby Quidditch uniform shining in the sun. Weaving through the air towards the far end of the pitch, he threw the Quaffle through the bottom left hoop and scored. He could hear Sirius whooping in the air from where he stood.

Severus watched the rest of their practice from the ground, staying out of sight. His eyes never left James and his fluttering robes. Eventually, the practice ended and the team landed. James spoke briefly to the group, and then they made their way towards the changing rooms. Severus followed them, and located James quickly.

"Hey, I've been looking all over for you," Severus said. James looked up from the Quidditch gear he was taking off and stumbled back a bit in shock. He readjusted himself and held his chin high in the air. James said nothing and went back to changing.

"Is everything ok?" Severus frowned when James stayed silent and kept on working at his buttons.

"Yep," James replied bluntly.

"Did you break up with Mary?" Severus asked after an awkward pause.

"No," James stated.

"No?" Severus repeated.

"That's what I said," James reiterated. He turned to face the rest of his team, but Severus pulled him back around by his shoulder. They were in a secluded corner of the room, and the rest of the team were loud enough that they wouldn't be overheard.

"James, what's wrong?" James finally met Severus' dark eyes after hearing the severity of his tone.

"I asked Mary about what happened. She said you kissed her," James explained as he pulled his grey blazer over his head.

"What? But I didn't- that isn't true," Severus said. He knew Mary was going to spin the story.

"I don't know what to believe," James said sheepishly, eyeing Severus up and down with a look of suspicion.

"Believe me," Severus stated. He didn't know how else to prove his innocence to James. It was his

word against Mary's.

"I've known her longer, she's my girlfriend. Besides I've seen you two together, I just thought you liked the attention," James countered, pulling the strap of his book bag up onto his shoulder. What was that supposed to mean? Severus tried to hide his offence.

"James, I didn't do anything," Severus tried to keep his voice down and his anger at bay, but it was getting harder to do so.

"That's not what she said," James said with a note of finality, but Severus wasn't ready to give up.

"What? No-, I-," Severus stammered and his cheeks flushed.

"Just, back off Snape," James said, slowly shaking his head as he spoke. He gathered his Quidditch gear and rejoined Sirius, who was by the door speaking to the team's keeper.

"Snape? What happened to Severus?" Severus called out after him. Going back to a last-name basis stung Severus, way more than he was willing to admit. It brought back too many memories from their previous years. James ignored him and disappeared through the doors.

Severus left the changing rooms after he levelled his breathing, and stalked back up to the castle. His mind was a mess, and he was trying to keep his building anxiety at bay. Fuck, Mary had spoken to James and blatantly lied to his face. It was only just hitting him, James didn't want to speak to him again. He truly believed Severus had done whatever awful things Mary had told him. A small part of Severus was telling him that James was done with him for good, that they'd never recover from this.

He knew this friendship was too good to be true.

## Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry :(

# So Tenderly You Watch Me Burn

## Chapter Summary

James thinks it's time to admit some things about himself. Lily re-evaluates her feelings towards James in light of these new revelations.

## Chapter Notes

This is definitely a smaller chapter, but fear not! The next chapter is a doozy :)

Chapter title is from Worldstar Money by Joji

The following weeks were painful. James had gone out of his way to avoid Severus, and subconsciously Severus realised he was doing the same thing. The last thing he wanted was for them to go back to the way they were - at each others throats for, in hindsight, no good reason. When he remembered it, it just made him feel worse. At least James could bare to look at him for the first six years of school.

Now, the only time James would acknowledge him was when Lily dragged Severus along with her to the library. Remus was usually there with them, and he was good-natured enough to ignore the elephant in the room. It was particularly terrible whenever Mary decided that she wanted to join the quartet. She tended to glare Severus out of the group whenever she showed up, but he couldn't stand being around her so he always left without a fuss.

After James and Severus' painful confrontation in the Quidditch changing room, Severus sought Lily out immediately. She was upset to hear that his plan had backfired, and was so worked up that she was ready to go yell at James herself.

"No, Lily, don't," Severus said when she threatened to maim him with her bare hands. "I don't want you to get mixed up in all this. Besides, you don't need to fight my battles for me."

Severus made her promise to keep this between him and James, and she reluctantly obliged. She also reassured him that what he did was the right thing to do. Lily thought that it was only a matter of time before James would discover that he'd made a mistake.

James, however, was taking the separation harder than he expected to. He knew it was going to be hard - cutting Severus out of his life after hearing the truth of the situation from Mary - but Mary had insisted on it.

"If you love me, you'll stop talking to him for me," Mary demanded after James confronted her about Severus' letter. It was probably for the best, and Mary was so genuine when she cried in James' arms about how Severus was "hell-bent" on separating them.

Though with each passing day, James missed Severus a fraction more. At first he couldn't explain it. Sirius and Remus were still his closest friends - besides Severus of course - and Lily was by his

side more this year than she had been for the past six years. He was surrounded by his friends, even Frank and Peter, who he saw less often nowadays. He was so busy with NEWT preparation and Quidditch that he shouldn't even have time to think about Severus.

But whenever he caught a glimpse of the Slytherin from across the classroom or Great Hall, he wouldn't leave James' mind for the next hour. It was confusing: Even though he wasn't speaking with Severus, he still occupied his every thought. It was spiralling out of hand, to the point where the last thought on James' mind before he went to sleep each night was of Severus and his pink lips.

James repressed his late night thoughts, writing it off as misplaced remorse. It wasn't right, he was with Mary, and she was good for him.

The truth became impossible to ignore on a lazy March morning when he woke up from a dream about Severus. Half hard. The dream featured the two of them spooning during the Christmas break. Severus' slender hips pushed back against James' in his sleep, James had been awake and locked the memory in the back of his mind for a different time. It had only decided to reappear now.

James shot up in his bed and peered around for his bunkmates, but it appeared that he'd overslept again and they left for breakfast without him. He sighed and flopped back down. It was time he admitted it.

He was gay. And he had more than friendly feelings towards Severus Snape.

Everything aligned. That strange jealousy he felt when he read Severus' letter and when Mary told him about what happened, he wasn't jealous of Severus. He was jealous of Mary. Painfully so.

There was virtually nothing he could do. James was with Mary now, he didn't feel right leaving her when she had been so good to him. It would break her heart. Besides, Severus had gone behind James' back, was that really the type of person he wanted to pursue?

Even when he listened to that little voice in the back of his head saying, "Severus didn't do it," he still came up blank. If that was the case, Severus certainly hated James now.

After their Charms lesson the next day, Lily Evans put an end to James' conundrum.

"James! Wait!" Lily called out after him. He halted and looked back over his shoulder. She ran after him, her red hair cascading behind her like a fiery waterfall. She quickly caught up to him and pulled him into a nearby alcove.

"What's the matter?" James asked. She looked thoroughly annoyed. James tried to recall anything he'd done in the past 24 hours to piss her off, but he came up blank.

"You can't tell Sev that I came to speak to you, but this has to stop," Lily demanded. James hadn't a clue what she was referring to. It must've shown on his face, because Lily huffed and continued.

"What are you trying to achieve? The poor boy is miserable without you," She snapped. It had been a long time since James saw Lily this angry, he did not miss it one bit.

"What am I trying to achieve? What does that even mean? He's the one who- wait," James inhaled sharply, "he's miserable? He doesn't loathe me?"

"Of course he is, what did you expect? You cut him off after he poured his heart out to you. He came to me for advice on how to tell you that Mary kissed him, that's how stressed he was," Lily



vented. James felt like he'd been blindsided.

"Fuck...seriously?" James said, running a hand through his hair.

"Yes, but for whatever stupid reason he came up with, he stopped me from telling you," Lily confessed. She paused and eyed James warily.

"Were you completely convinced that Severus Snape would make a move on a girl like that? Especially your girlfriend? When have you ever known him to be like that?" Lily asked and her mouth curved into a smile. She made a valid point, James thought. Did that mean that Severus was...

"You're right," James let out an uneasy laugh. He sighed, he knew he needed to tell Lily what Mary had asked him to do.

"When I approached Mary about Severus' letter, she denied it and accused him of coming onto her. I was angry, of course, and I didn't know what to do. But Mary... Mary ordered me to immediately cut all ties with him. I didn't want to of course, but she broke down. She started saying all these twisted things about how I don't really love her if I wasn't willing to do this. So I caved," James explained.

"Oh, James, she manipulated you," Lily said under her breath. James ignored the way his stomach churned when he realised she was correct.

"I convinced myself that it was the right thing to do, and we haven't spoken since. Merlin, it all seems so melodramatic now," James chuckled.

"You think it's melodramatic? Imagine what it's like to watch you two idiots," Lily retorted. They laughed together, before a more sombre look crossed Lily's face. "What are you going to do?"

James sighed. He knew in his heart what was the right thing to do, but it wasn't going to be easy.

"I'm going to get the truth from Mary, once and for all. I want to know why she really did it," James stated.

"Good, best do it quickly then. I can't stand another minute of Sev moping around like a lost soul," Lily said. James surged forward and pulled Lily into a tight hug. He couldn't thank her enough for helping him decide what to do.

"Severus and I...I know we can make it through this," James spoke after they pulled apart, "I just hope that we can put all of this behind us. I love him, you know? I'm sick of him looking so resentful towards me."

Lily tilted her head and furrowed her brow at his words.

"If I didn't know any better, I'd say you were speaking about your lover," Lily pried. James blanched, then went bright red.

"I- what do you- that's not-," James stammered, struggling to find the words to defend himself.

Lily's eyes widened and she gasped, "Wait, were you two ever...*together*...like that?" She didn't know if she wanted to know the answer.

"No! Of course not," James shot back, crossing his arms over his chest. James watched as something twinkled in Lily's green eyes and several different emotions crossed her face before she

settled on one: smugness.

“I know you, James Potter, and I know that look you get when you want something desperately. I just never thought that the something you wanted would be Severus Snape,” Lily teased. James tried to shush her and looked around to see if anyone had overheard. Thankfully, the hallway was deserted.

“No, I- fine. You’re right,” Lily grinned up at him, “but how did you know?” James asked, eyes trained on her dainty face.

“You looked so...*passionate* when you said you loved him, more than you ever are towards Sirius or Remus. Or anyone else for that matter,” Lily said. The two chuckled together as James shrugged.

“I can’t believe I’ve been struggling to describe what I’m feeling for months, and you knew just like that,” James smiled.

“I’ve learnt to recognise the signs, especially with Sirius and Remus dancing around each other for the past year,” Lily answered. James frowned, he’d completely forgotten about Sirius and Remus, and how they’d react if they knew the truth. James knew they would be fine with him being gay: It’d be incredibly hypocritical if they weren’t. He just hoped that they wouldn’t mind that Severus was the object of his desires.

“About Sirius and Remus, can you keep this between us?” James asked. Lily gave him a soft smile.

“Of course, you don’t even need to ask.”

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Lily took her usual seat next to Severus in their afternoon Potions class. Slughorn’s tired voice wafted through her ears, but for once she was too wrapped up in her own thoughts to pay attention.

She knew being with James was a long shot, but now that it was impossible she felt that it was easier to let go of her feelings towards him. She wanted James to be happy, and if he would be happy with Severus, then she supported him. She just hoped that Severus returned his feelings, but he was so hard to read. Lily thought they would make an interesting couple, she just hoped that Severus wouldn’t push James away if he knew the truth.

“Lily, how is James?” Severus asked once Slughorn dismissed the class. He seemed almost embarrassed to be asking her about him.

“I know you miss him, Sev,” Lily sighed, “He’s working through some things at the moment.” She tried to keep it vague, it wasn’t exactly her place to say.

“Oh?” Severus prompted her to continue. She needed to steer him away from that subject quickly.

“But hey, guess what?” Severus looked at Lily expectantly. “I think I’ve gotten over my crush on James,” she stated with a smile. Severus’ face fell, that had really caught his attention.

“What? Why?” He asked, eyeing her with suspicion.

“No reason, really, it just felt right to move on,” Lily answered.

“What is that supposed to mean?” Severus asked incredulously. Lily merely shrugged and left Severus’ side to find Marlene.

Severus decided to retire early to the Slytherin common room before dinner. His mind was whirring through what Lily had told him, trying to decrypt any secret meaning to what she said. He came up blank.

# Quench My Desire

## Chapter Summary

Mary reveals her true intentions to James. James seeks out reconciliation with Severus, but has some ulterior motives.

## Chapter Notes

CW: homophobic slur

Chapter title is from Give In To Me by Michael Jackson

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

James didn't seek out Mary until the next morning. She was under the tree in the courtyard with the other seventh year Gryffindor and Ravenclaw girls. As she saw James approaching, she tucked a long, dark strand of hair behind her ear and shot him a smile. James pointedly didn't return the smile, he just kept his brow firmly furrowed. He didn't spare a glance at the confusion on her friend's faces: They'd never seen him look so cross before. Mary's face fell.

"Can I speak with you?" James asked, eyes locked on Mary's guilty expression. She nodded, but made no further movement, prompting James to add, "Alone?"

She followed him away from the group of girls, now whispering behind raised hands. They kept walking until they were in a more secluded area of the castle grounds. There were some fifth year Gryffindor boys roughhousing nearby, but that was it. James halted and rounded on Mary, who still bore a perplexed expression.

"Did you kiss Severus?" James asked, his jaw clenched firmly. Mary frowned in confusion. Whatever it was that she was expecting, it certainly hadn't been this.

"James, babe, I already told you. He came onto me, not the other way around," Mary answered, but her face betrayed her. James knew she was lying the moment she bit the inside of her cheek. It was brief but James noticed it.

James screwed his eyes shut and pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose. If she insisted on lying, this whole ordeal was going to be a lot more painful.

"I'm only going to ask you one more time. Did you kiss Severus and lie to me about it?" James asked, fists clenched at his sides.

"No," Mary repeated. Her eyes darted away from his.

"You're lying," James snapped, making Mary look back up to him. "I know what he said was true, that you pushed yourself onto him. After all the lying you've done, I think I deserve to hear the truth from you."

This made Mary finally crack. Her face contorted with anger, pulling her smooth lips down into a twisted frown and narrowing her eyes.

"Fine, if it's the truth you want then I'll happily oblige, James. I came onto him, but not because I have some pathetic crush on him or whatever bullshit I fed him," Mary spat. James reeled back.

"Wait, what-," James tried to interject.

"I knew he was going to run straight to you with his tail between his legs. Then all I had to do was convince you that he was the one to blame, and I got you all to myself again," Mary explained, thin arms crossed over her chest as she glared up at James.

"What do you mean?" James asked.

"You spend all your time with Snape," Mary spat out his name like it was a curse word, "and you neglected me. Now that he's finally out of the picture, I've got your full attention again."

"So you thought the only way to get me to yourself again - which is fucked up, might I add - was to cheat on me with one of my best friends? You can't keep me like one of your little pets!" James said in disbelief. Mary's eyes widened.

"But can't you see that I had to do it? I was only trying to help you," Mary tried to reason.

"Trying to help me?" James pried, furrowing his brow.

"Well, yeah." When James still didn't understand what she was talking about, Mary continued. "Oh *come on*, James. You can't tell me that you haven't noticed the way he looks at you. It's unnatural, and I don't want you being around some *queer*-"

"Take it back!" James roared. Mary flinched back, James looked around and saw some people watching their fight. James lowered his voice.

"So that's what you think this is about?" James scowled. "Some petty jealousy drove you to do this?"

"James, I was only looking out for you-"

"No, you were only looking out for yourself," James said, eyes averted to the side. Mary reached out to grasp his hand, but James pulled back. He glared at Mary and took a step backwards.

"It's over," James said bluntly.

"W-what? James you can't mean that," Mary stammered, tears welling in her eyes. James didn't know what she expected, honestly, there was no way he was ever going to let this all slide.

"I'm serious. I don't want you around me anymore, and it'll be in your best interest to leave Severus alone too," James scowled. He started to walk away, leaving her standing in the rays of the noon sun.

"So that's it? After everything, you're still going to pick him over me?" Mary shouted after James. He stopped in his tracks and looked over his shoulder.

"What does it look like?" James said with a note of finality. He didn't turn back when Mary screamed after him again.

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That night found James, Sirius, Remus, and Lily huddled around the fireplace in the Gryffindor common room. Sirius was crumpling individual pieces of paper and throwing them onto the flickering flames. James laid back against the couch and looked up to the roof of the common room. The cheerful, yet hushed voices of his friends wafted through his ears, not really taking any of it in. His mind was too busy mulling over what Mary confessed earlier in the day.

"I'm sure that Marlene said Alice was going to ask Frank out to Hogsmeade this weekend. The poor girl has been waiting years for Frank to make a move on her," Lily said.

"Good for them, I was starting to lose hope that they'd end up together," Sirius chuckled.

"Sounds like two other people I know," Lily muttered under her breath. Sirius either didn't hear or completely ignored her jab because he swiftly changed the topic.

"Hey, I saw Mary crying earlier, she was with Charlie. You know, the Hufflepuff chick? I wonder what that was about," Sirius mused. He crumpled a piece of paper into a ball and threw it at Remus' face. "Maybe she finally learnt what those pixies really did to Ovan the Ostentatious. She still takes History of Magic, she should know by now. What do you think, Prongsey?"

No one noticed how silent James had been over the past several minutes. When they refocused their attention to him, they found him in that reclined position, eyes dazed and unseeing.

He roused from his thoughts when Sirius jostled him and murmured a tentative, "James?"

"We broke up, that's probably why she was crying," James answered, finally bringing his gaze back down to meet his friends' shocked faces.

"I mean, that'd do it- ouch! What?" Sirius groaned and shot a glare at Remus, who delivered a sharp hit to his arm in an attempt to shut him in. Sirius rubbed his arm as James sighed.

"What Sirius means is we're sorry to hear that, James. Why?" Remus asked.

"It turns out that Mary tried to cheat on me with Severus, and she made me drive him away so she could have my undivided attention," James explained.

"Undivided attention? You still spent most of your time with us though," Remus said.

"That's what confused me too," James said. He chose to leave out the horrible slur she called Severus, that was clearly one of the main reasons she hated Severus more than James' other friends.

"Wait, does that mean that Snape was telling the truth this whole time?" Sirius asked.

"Yeah, I royally fucked up this time," James moaned as he stared into the fire.

"Bloody hell, Prongs, good luck worming your way out of this one," Sirius said.

"I guess I'll have to sleep on it," James sighed and ran a hand through his hair. "I think I'm going to go to bed, I just need a bit of time alone."

"Whatever you need, James," Remus shot him a sad smile, which James returned before he left his three friends huddled around the fire.

Once he was in the seventh year dormitory, he hastily changed into his nightwear and crawled under his covers. He huffed as he tossed and turned, he couldn't settle his mind enough to sleep. He needed to find Severus tomorrow, but he didn't know what to say yet.

James stewed over it all night and well into the next day. He and Sirius spent their early Saturday afternoon in the Great Hall. It was mostly empty today, so James invested himself into the Marauder's Map he and Sirius had laid out on the Gryffindor table.

"I just added a charm that prevents the map from taking any water damage, can't believe we didn't think of that before," Sirius laughed. James absently laughed with him, but his eyes were scanning the map, looking for that one specific name.

There he was, Severus Snape. His name was unmoving in one of the back rows of the library.

"Hey Padfoot? I've got to head out for a bit. I have some unfinished business in the library," James stated as he gathered his books he had previously strewn across the table.



"What? Don't leave me here alone!" Sirius begged.

"You won't be alone, Moony will be here soon enough," James said. Sirius playfully rolled his eyes before shooing James away.

"Whatever you're doing, make it quick!" Sirius called out after him. James had a sinking feeling that what was going to follow would be anything but quick.

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As much as Severus liked Lily's company, it was sometimes refreshing to work alone. Here, in between the stacks at the back of the library, Severus felt strangely detached from everything that was going on. Lily was being vague, James still wasn't speaking to him, and his fellow Slytherin housemates had started to become more vocal about their support for You Know Who. They weren't a group Severus wanted to be associated with, not now that his seventh year had been - for the most part - enjoyable.

He sat on the low windowsill, book in his lap and ink pot on the adjacent desk. The spring rays warmed his face pleasantly, he discarded his outer robes so he was left in his grey blazer and black pants.

His peaceful state was disturbed by the sound of approaching footsteps. Whoever was coming clearly wanted to see him, no one else had any reason to come this far back into the library on a weekend. The footsteps stopped when they reached his row. Severus didn't bother looking up from his book. When the person didn't speak, Severus sighed loudly. He had a feeling he knew who it was.

"Bugger off, Avery. I don't feel like helping you with your Charms assignment," Severus drawled as he turned the page with a flourish. The person still made no attempt to speak, clearly it wasn't Avery.

Severus looked up and his stomach flipped. It was James Potter. He looked rather bashful, an expression Severus had never really seen on him before. His golden eyes locked onto Severus' and the corners of his lips turned up in a small smile.

"Hey," James breathed.

"Oh." Severus took in a shaky breath and didn't return the smile. "Hey."

He was wary, James hadn't spoken to him for the past month, so what was this? James cleared his throat and took a step into the row.

"I take it that Avery's been pestering you again?" James asked with a chuckle.

"Yeah," Severus replied uneasily with a small nod. He returned his attention to his book, he didn't know what else to say.

"Man, I'm sorry," James blurted out, "about everything." Severus' head snapped up, this caught his attention. He didn't take his eyes off James as he closed his Astronomy book and placed it on the wooden table next to his ink pot.

James walked to the end of the row and sat at the opposite end of the windowsill. Severus watched as James leaned back against the wooden frame, his already tanned skin seemed to glow more in the light. James' face held a certain element of vulnerability that made Severus feel uneasy.

"I was a dick, and I got jealous," James confessed, "because I was afraid of losing someone I loved."

Severus' chest constricted at James' words.

"I would *never* come between you and Mary," Severus said in earnest. He was beginning to feel like a broken record.

"Screw her! No, I was afraid of losing you," James professed, his eyes trained on Severus' stunned face. Severus felt blindsided by James' revelation.

"Oh," he breathed. James habitually pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose as he recollected his thoughts.

"I just- before we became friends, I felt like something wasn't right. Like I couldn't be myself, I guess. And with Mary...we are just so different-," James tried to explain.

"Yeah, like she's a huge dick and you're not?" Severus supplied. James beamed at him.

"Yes," James agreed before the two laughed together before they lapsed into another silence. Severus averted his eyes from James' intense gaze.

"And then you and I got in that stupid fight, and we didn't talk," James continued, "And I missed you. I mean, I *really* missed you." James paused to take in a shaky breath. "And I just want my best friend back."

"I thought Sirius was your best friend," Severus said, coaxing a smile out of James.

"You know what I mean, you git," James teased. The two chuckled again, and Severus looked back into James' eyes again.

"But I missed you too," Severus confessed with a small smile. James' eyes lit up as a weight seemed to lift from his shoulders at his words.

Severus was glad that James finally realised what a snake Mary was. It was torture having to see them together when Severus knew the truth. Lily's words in Potions made sense now: Whatever James was working through had to be his break up, right?

Meanwhile, an idea came to James' mind.

"Let's forehead promise, to never leave each other again," James spoke with a grin. Severus raised an eyebrow and slowly found himself matching James' smile.

"Ok...what is that?" Severus questioned.

"Come here, I'll show you," James said as he began to shift down the windowsill towards Severus' end. Severus quickly copied James until their knees knocked together, they were now in the middle of the sill. Their backs faced the mid-afternoon sun as they turned to face each other.

James leaned forward to press his forehead against Severus'. He wasn't surprised to find the skin there was smooth. Severus waited expectantly for James to explain what they were doing, but it never came.

"That's it," James chuckled. The two laughed softly with each other, they knew how ridiculous they looked. James' tongue darted out to wet his lips. "Is it obvious that I just made this up?" He added in a whisper.

But Severus hardly heard him, he was focused on how close James' lips were to his. The proximity was started to mess with his mind, and Severus noted that he could faintly smell mint. He noticed how quiet James had gone too.

James suddenly shifted, ever so slightly, so their lips were only a fraction apart. Severus slowly began to match his movements, leaning up into James at that same, slow pace. In that moment, Severus realised something.

James Potter was going to kiss him. So why wasn't he reeling back in horror? It suddenly dawned on him: Severus wanted James to kiss him.

Severus' eyes slipped shut as he leaned forward to finally close the gap-

"James! Sirius said you would be here- oh," Remus said as he rounded the corner into their row and stopped dead in his tracks.

"Remus!" James gasped as he and Severus sprung apart like they'd been electrocuted. Severus felt his face start to burn as he avoided looking at either of the other two present. Remus gaped at the pair before regaining his composure.

"Sorry, I-," Remus struggled to find the words.

"Yeah, sorry, what did you want?" James pursed his lips and tried to play off his embarrassment.

"Professor McGonagall's looking for you, she sent me to come get you. Said it was something to do with your recent Transfiguration work," Remus said.

"Right, cheers Moony," James nodded towards his friend. He turned to face Severus, who had retreated to his previous position against the window frame.

"Thanks for hearing me out, I'll see you again soon," James said. He brought his hand up to rest on the back of his neck. Severus gave him a curt nod, neither meeting each other's eyes. James picked up his book bag and disappeared around the corner.

After watching him leave, Remus turned to face Severus. He could feel Remus' shocked eyes on his, but he could hardly focus. His mind was too busy replaying the events that just unfolded.

Severus redirected his attention to the silent Gryffindor. He knew he had a lot of questions to answer, but he was just as confused as Remus.

## Chapter End Notes

Ok yes Ovan the Ostentatious is completely made up, it's still fun to make up random magical historical figures though haha

I hope you all enjoyed this chapter :)

# Although My Lips Are Blue And I'm Cold

## Chapter Summary

James receives an offer for his future. Remus and Severus empathise with each other. James and Severus share a vulnerable moment.

## Chapter Notes

Sorry this update took so long! My college exams are approaching so updates are going to slow down over the next month or so, but stick around because once this semester is over I should be able to finish most of this book. Anyways, I hope you enjoy this longer chapter!

Chapter title from I Wanna Be Your Girlfriend by Girl In Red.

James barely heard the sound of his own hand rapping on McGonagall's office door over his blood rushing in his ears. His mind was whirring a thousand miles an hour, and most of his thoughts were along the lines of: "why the fuck did you try to kiss him?"

He only gained Severus' trust back a minute before he pulled that stupid stunt, and he might have just ruined their friendship for a second time. He still didn't even know if Severus was gay.

The door swung open on its own accord, and the Transfiguration professor sat behind her elegant, mahogany desk. She looked up from the papers she was marking and placed her quill in her ink pot when she spotted James. She gave him a warm smile, or as warm as McGonagall could get.

"James, I trust your presence means Mr Lupin found you without a problem. I hope I wasn't interrupting something important," McGonagall greeted. James gulped and straightened his posture, he wouldn't let her know what exactly she interrupted.

"What did you need me for Professor?" James asked. He sat down opposite McGonagall.

"Well, as you're well aware, you've always been an extremely advanced transfiguration student. I know you want to work as an Auror someday, however I want you to know that you have other options if you change your mind. Your work in transfiguration is nothing short of phenomenal, and under the right tutelage, you could flourish in the field," McGonagall explained.

"What are you saying?" James asked.

"I want to offer you an apprenticeship, here at Hogwarts," McGonagall said with a gentle smile. James reeled back and his heartbeat leapt in his throat.

"Seriously? Professor...I-," James stammered.

"Of course I don't expect you to have an answer right away. I wanted you to know that the offer is there in case you change your mind about becoming an Auror," McGonagall explained.

"Why me?" James asked.

"Several of the staff members are offering mentorships for a select few in your cohort. As I am aware, Professor Flitwick has already spoken to your friend Miss Evans about a Charms apprenticeship that she accepted," McGonagall said. James blinked. Lily hadn't told anyone about her new mentor, although it didn't surprise James, he knew how brilliant she was in Charms. She was top of their year.

"I'll consider it. Thank you, Professor," James said sincerely. He rose from his chair to exit the room.

"James, wait. I mean it when you say you can take your time to decide if you want to do this or not. This offer stands for the next several years, it's not going to disappear overnight. You have a true aptitude for Transfiguration, I'd hate to see it go to waste if you decide that the Auror field isn't for you," McGonagall said. James nodded and shot her a smile before leaving.

He mulled over McGonagall's proposal. He had to seek Lily out and ask her for advice on how she reached her decision. This new dilemma pushed the incident with Severus in the library to the back of James' mind.

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"So..." Remus drawled, eyeing Severus up and down. The two dwelled in an awkward silence after James left, neither of them daring to speak until now.

"What?" Severus snapped.

"Hey, you don't have to play dumb around me," Remus defended. He sighed and sat atop the wooden desk. The two lapsed into another awkward silence. Severus fiddled with a loose thread on his sleeve, desperate to redirect his attention away from his thumping heartbeat.

"I'm sorry for interrupting whatever that was, I won't tell anyone what I saw," Remus offered. Severus shot him a glare.

"There's nothing to tell, and you weren't interrupting anything," Severus replied.

"Oh please, Severus. A blind man could tell that I interrupted something there," Remus countered.

"There's nothing going on, trust me," Severus shot back. Remus noticed how his shoulders slumped when he said that, and Remus felt a tad defeated.

Remus never expected that James would swing that way, especially since he spent most of their former years at Hogwarts chasing after Lily Evans. That's not to mention his other flings too, such as Mary McDonald. However, there was no mistaking what he just saw.

Meanwhile, Severus had similar thoughts racing through his mind. It could be chalked up to a 'heat of the moment' thing, but Severus found himself hoping that wasn't the case. Up until now, he assumed that James was as straight as they came, and that he was just comfortable with his sexuality. That explained the way he acted around Severus.

Severus now doubted this was the case. Did his own compliance with James' attempt to kiss him mean that he wasn't straight either? After all, he found himself wanting to kiss him too, he didn't make any attempt to pull away.

"Hey, for what it's worth, I know how you feel," Remus spoke up after noticing how Severus seemed to be battling with himself. He eyed the Gryffindor carefully, prompting him to continue.

"I'm sure James has told you about my feelings for Sirius," Remus quietly confessed. Severus' head shot up to meet the other's vulnerable gaze. Severus grasped the opportunity to take the attention



off himself.

"He hasn't. All James ever talks about is how Sirius is madly in love with you," Severus drawled. Of course, this wasn't overtly true. Severus just wanted to give Remus a shove in the right direction. Remus flushed and fidgeted with his robes.

"He's not madly in love with me, as you so gracefully put it," Remus defended.

"Oh really? I thought you were the smart one in your group, Remus," Severus deadpanned. He smirked when he saw Remus' face screw up as he shook his head. Something told him that Remus was going to ignore his admission.

"Seriously, Severus. I'll forget what I saw here," Remus said. Severus gave him a curt nod and the Gryffindor disappeared behind the row of books, leaving Severus alone in the library again.

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For the next week, James and Severus couldn't catch a moment alone together. Whether it was their friends or their classes, something was always interrupting the two of them. Saturday night quickly came around again and James was annoyed that he barely saw Severus the whole week. That morning, James sought out Severus and told him to meet him outside the Slytherin common room at 10pm.

"Who has the map? I need to use it tonight," James asked, invisibility cloak folded underneath his arm. Remus shrugged his shoulders, not looking up from his book as he sat crossed-legged on his bed. Sirius pulled the map out from the drawer on his bedside table.

"What are you getting up to tonight?" Sirius asked, furrowing his brow and looking at James out of the corner of his eye.

"I'm meeting Severus. You guys will cover for me if anyone asks, right?" James asked. A sly grin spread across Sirius' face.

"Yeah, we will. I just thought you would've gotten sick of your boy toy by now," Sirius mused as he passed the map over. James snatched the map from his grasp as his chest gave a painful thump.

"Boy toy?" James panicked. Was he really that obvious? His eyes darted over to Remus, whose eyes shot up to give James a knowing look. Remus subtly shrugged- he hadn't been the one to tell Sirius.

"Yeah, Mary's been trying to start some weird rumours about you. Don't worry though, no one's buying it," Sirius explained as he fell back down onto his mattress. James' stomach flipped uncomfortably as he imagined what Mary was spreading about him. Going off Sirius' reaction, it wasn't too serious. He was just glad Sirius didn't find out the truth through someone else instead of him. When the time was right, he'd tell Sirius what was really going on.

James had to figure out where he stood with Severus first.

Despite Sirius' reassurance, James had noticed how most of the seventh year Ravenclaw girls give him a dirty look whenever he passed them. It was probably nothing, James decided as he opened the map. Sure enough, Severus Snape was outside the Slytherin common room, and Filch and Mrs Norris were far away from the dungeons.

James donned the invisibility cloak and took off.

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Severus leaned against the cool stones of the dungeon wall, waiting for James. He was under a disillusionment charm which kept him from being spotted by patrolling teachers. A silent tempus spell told Severus that it was 10pm exactly. Knowing his luck, he wouldn't be able to get back into the Slytherin quarters tonight.

"Severus," a hushed voice sounded from a few metres away. It was non-corporeal, seemingly coming from no where, but Severus knew better than that. It had to be James under a similar disillusionment charm. Severus took off his glamour just as James appeared out of thin air.

He carried an inked piece of parchment under his left arm, and held a shimmering fabric in his opposite hand. It was unlike anything Severus had ever seen, and it appeared to be the thing that was hiding James from sight.

"An invisibility cloak?" He asked.

"Yeah, it's a family heirloom," James explained as he sauntered over to the Slytherin. Severus tried

to hide his awe, what kind of wealth did the Potters have to afford a genuine invisibility cloak?

James threw the cloak over the two of them and cast a nonverbal lumos so he could read the Marauder's Map. James scoured the map for Filch's name again. When he didn't spot it, he grabbed Severus by the wrist and steered them out of the dungeons.

"What is that?" Severus whispered incredulously.

"We call it the Marauder's map. It lets us see where everyone is in Hogwarts at any given moment," James replied, matching his hushed tone.

"There's no way it shows every single person-"

"Have a look. Who's that?" James points to a still figure near the Gryffindor tower.

"Is that-"

"Professor McGonagall? The one and the same," James confirmed. Severus tried to hide his awe for a second time that night.

"This is incredibly advanced stuff, I can't believe you pulled it off," Severus said, his eyes training over every inch of the map.

"You know what its best benefit is?" James asked. He suddenly halted in his tracks, Severus collided into his right shoulder. James pointed at a particular name with his wand.

'Argus Filch' was quickly approaching their current corridor. He rounded the corner as James cast a silent nox and pressed Severus back against the wall to keep Filch from walking straight into them.

Severus instinctively went to scold James for crowding him into the wall, but James' large hand flew up to cover his mouth before he could do so. The two stood still, waiting with bated breath for the caretaker to trudge away into another part of the castle. Once the light from his oil lamp disappeared, they sighed and continued their journey. Severus pointedly ignored James' physical approach to protecting them from being discovered, and his own carnal reaction.

It didn't take Severus too long to work out where they were heading. James had refused to tell him where they were going when he asked earlier in the day. All he had said was that he missed the Slytherin's company and that he was going to take them to a peaceful spot. It became obvious what that spot was when they reached a set of spiralling stairs.

"The Astronomy Tower?" Severus asked.

"Yeah, a few months ago you told me how relaxing it was to come up here and stare at the stars. There aren't any classes tonight because it's a Saturday, so I took the opportunity to drag you up here with me," James explained. Once they reached the top, James took off the invisibility cloak and folded it along with the map.

Severus made his way to the railing around the outside of the tower. There was a light breeze, Severus inhaled as he relished in the feeling of the cool air on his flushed skin; it had gotten quite warm underneath that cloak. He tip his head back to look directly at his zenith, and only looked back down when he felt James brush against his side.

"I never knew you were really into Astronomy until Remus told me how you two study together for the subject," James mused. He leaned forward on the railing, and Severus matched his movements. The two looked out across the Great Lake, the mirror image of the sky shimmered on the surface of the dark water.

"It's not Defence or Potions, but it has it's own charm. There's nothing quite like looking out at space and just taking it all in, you know?" Severus said. He felt James inhale deeply next to him, his side pressing even more up against him.

"I stopped taking Astronomy after the OWLs, obviously, but I think I could still spot more constellations than you," James teased. He knew he absolutely couldn't out-spot Severus, he just wanted to hear the Slytherin speak. He couldn't get enough of his soothing baritone now that it was back in his life.

"What kind of game is that?" Severus scoffed, although it did sound fun.

"The type of game that I beat you at," James shot back smugly. Severus was well aware that James was trying to rile him up, but it was working nonetheless.

The two spent the next half an hour avidly searching the sky. Severus quickly found the majority of visible constellations, and along the way he gave James some tidbit information about the stars that make up Orion's belt and Cassiopeia. James spotted Perseus and Draco, but Severus had beaten him to the rest.

Severus crowned himself the winner, and James asked him to tell him more about the stars. He listened as Severus spoke about his favourite star; Vega; and his least favourite star; Proxima Centauri, among a myriad of other, lighthearted space topics. While Severus mused at the sky, James caught himself wondering how someone could have a least favourite star.

Severus found himself running out of things to teach James about, but James seemed content just listening.

"So what's the real reason you brought me up here tonight? I know it wasn't just to listen to be ramble about stars for hours on end," Severus asked.

"I feel like I haven't seen you around a lot in the past week. We're always either too busy or with other people, it's nice for the two of us to hang out together, you know?" James said, feeling a rare moment of insecurity as he spoke. After what happened in the library, everything had a new context. He didn't want Severus to overanalyse it and run away from him in disgust.

"Also I have some news I wanted to tell you," James quickly averted the subject. Severus' stomach flipped uneasily at the urgency in James' voice. "McGonagall offered me an apprenticeship."

"Really? That's great, James. I knew your extra Transfiguration study would pay off," Severus said, a soft smile tugging at the corners of his mouth.

"I didn't accept it though," James clarified.

"Because you want to go into Auror training?" Severus asked.

"Yeah, you know me too well," James laughed. Severus rolled his eyes.

"Please, anyone who's witnessed you open your mouth knows you want to become an Auror," Severus said.

"Shut up," James laughed again as he elbowed Severus's arm, causing him to chuckle along with him. The two fell silent as James continued, "I'm considering it though. I don't know what I want to do."

Severus pondered for a solution for a moment before settling on the only obvious choice.

"Wait until you get your NEWTs, then you can decide what you want to do depending on your grades," Severus suggested.

"I think that's probably the best thing I can do," James agreed. The two lapsed into a comfortable silence. Severus subconsciously inched closer to James, the wind was beginning to chill him and the Gryffindor was radiating more heat than a furnace.

"I never asked you, but how did Mary take the break up?" Severus questioned, breaking the silence. James barked out a bitter laugh before composing himself.

"Oh, not too well. I think she's been talking to her friends outside of Gryffindor and telling them that I'm a huge asshole, so there goes my chances of dating any Ravenclaw birds," he answered.

"Are you kidding me? A pun?" Severus drawled.

"You know me too well," James replied. Severus hung his head as he groaned.

"Not that I want to do that anyways," James said under his breath. Severus tensed up and swallowed as he processed James' near-silent confession. He didn't say anything, and the silence stretched out a moment too long. James cleared his throat as he mustered up enough gall to bring up the elephant in the room.

"So, ah- how are you? You know, since-," James stumbled over his words. He bit his lip to silence himself, the last thing he needed to do right now was make things more awkward. It was inevitable that this topic was going to surface tonight.

"Oh! Yeah, I'm fine. I'm great!" Severus replied hastily. His stomach flipped and he clenched his jaw, adrenaline began to course through his system. There was no mistaking what James was

referring to.

"Things are really great the way they are at the moment, and I don't want to do anything to mess it up," Severus continued slowly. He kept his head steady, eyes fixed out at a star low on the horizon.

Severus refused to look at James. He needed to get this off his chest and it would be impossible to do so if that penetrating gaze was fixated on him. He'd only recognised his new feelings for what they were about a week ago; an infatuation. He never considered the possibility that he could be attracted to men, but it seems like James might be the exception.

Or maybe, he was the rule.

It was still too soon for Severus to tell.

He never relied on his feelings to guide his decisions, but his brain malfunctioned anytime he found himself within James' vicinity. All Severus' logic failed him more often than not when it came to the topic of the handsome Gryffindor boy. He had no other choice.

"But sometimes, a thing just feels so *right*, you know?" Severus finished. James didn't say anything. They both just kept looking straight out across the Great Lake. Both James and Severus hadn't moved from their positions atop the tower- leaning forward on the metal railing with their hands dangling over the edge.

Severus' left hand fell to his side as he shifted his posture, grazing James' arm as it fell. James slowly copied Severus' movements, dropping his right hand so his knuckles grazed the back of Severus' hand as they fell. James slowly intertwined his pinkie finger with Severus', sending a tingling sensation throughout the Slytherin's hand.

Severus didn't dare to look at James, he steeled himself and kept looking forward. He could feel James' eyes on him, looking at him out of the corner of his eye. His cheeks began to burn. Severus could feel James moving again, he shifted his hand until their palms pressed together. They interlaced their fingers tightly, and Severus relished in the warmth the other was emitting. His hands were usually cold, but together they made a perfect, personal equilibrium.

Neither spoke, they just stood in the cool night air with their hands clasped together. James bit his lip as he gave Severus' hand a small squeeze. He started to trace small circles on the back of Severus's hand with his thumb, sending rippling waves of pleasure up Severus' spine.

They could have stayed like that for hours. Severus had gradually leaned into James' touch, and the Gryffindor offered his shoulder as a place for Severus to rest his head. James didn't protest as he began to support more and more of Severus' weight.

They were only interrupted by a shrill hiss followed by a loud meow that jolted them from their relaxed state. They whipped around to discover the glowing, amber eyes of Mrs Norris. She was perched on the top step, looking quite proud as she waited for Filch to reach her and catch the two students out after dark.

James hastily dropped Severus' hand, shook out the invisibility cloak and threw it over the top of them. No sooner had they disappeared from sight did Filch reach the top of the stairs. He held his oil lamp up to eye level and swivelled around to look for the offenders.

"Nothing here sweets, let's go," he grumbled. He slunk back down the stairs and whistled for the cat to follow him. Mrs Norris eyed the spot where the pair disappeared before following her owner.

James didn't bother taking off the invisibility cloak. Instead, he reopened the map and watched it until the patrolling duo were out of the tower.

"It's getting late, we should probably head back," James whispered, his lips only an inch away from Severus' ear. Severus hummed an affirmative and they descended the staircase.

The two made their way silently through the castle. James accompanied Severus down to the dungeons; he refused to let him try to get back to his common room with only a simple disillusionment charm. They didn't speak until they reached the entrance to the Slytherin common room, and even then they only bid each other a quick good night before parting.

Although Severus didn't want to leave James' side, he couldn't wait until he was in the privacy of his dorm to unpack this evening.



# I'm Not Finished, 'cause You're Not By My Side

## Chapter Summary

James lets his jealousy take over after a Slug Club dinner party, Lily's unfazed by this point. Mixed messages ahoy! Regulus Black has a quick cameo.

## Chapter Notes

I'm sorry for the late upload again, and I hate to say that the next chapter probably won't be up until early July. I hope this chapter is enough to feed you until next time lol

Chapter title from Why'd You Only Call Me When You're High? by Arctic Monkeys. This song has always reminded me of Snape idk why

Life went on and Severus and James never addressed that night in the astronomy tower. Severus began to notice how James went out of his way to be close to him, to touch him unnecessarily. A hand grazing his own, fingers finding their way to his hair to brush a strand behind his ear, or a simple hand resting on his shoulder or even the small of his back. Each touch left a burning sensation, searing through Severus' clothes straight to his skin.

Wednesday morning found them walking together to the dungeons for Potions. Remus and Lily lead the way, swapping notes from the previous class, while Sirius trailed behind them, talking to Alice.

As they entered the classroom, Severus noticed an open, broiling cauldron at Slughorn's station. Next, a wave of strong smells assaulted his nose, stopping him in his tracks just inside the doorway. It was pleasant, calming, and made Severus feel warm inside. The rest of the students seemed equally entranced, eyes fixated on the cauldron and not really focusing on where they were walking.

Sirius walked straight into Severus' back, not watching where he was walking either. He didn't apologise, just screwed up his nose in confusion and swivelled to face Remus.

"Moony, I think you overdid it on the cologne today, we're going to have to fumigate the dungeons at this rate," Sirius loudly teased his friend. He grinned and tossed his wavy, black hair as he waited for his friend to take the bait. Retaliation never came, instead Remus furrowed his brow and cocked his head.

"But I'm not wearing cologne today," he replied. Sirius' face fell as he whipped his head around to face the cauldron.

Slughorn finished his sentence on the chalkboard at the opposite end of the room. He placed the piece of chalk on his desk and gave the class a smile that could easily be mistaken as a grimace.

"Hello class. You're probably wondering what that lovely smell is, and I'm about to answer that. Today we're going to be doing a case study on amortentia, one of the most powerful love potions in existence," Slughorn's weary voice echoed across the chamber.

"The smell it produces is unique and based on the individual smelling the potion. In other words, the potion smells different to everybody, and it's based on what you're most attracted to," Slughorn continued.

Severus watched as Sirius bowed his head to hide his face as it went the brightest colour of red he'd ever seen. He had never seen the Gryffindor boy look so ashamed and embarrassed in his life. Remus' face glowed a similar colour, his gaze skipped straight over Sirius and landed on Severus instead. Remus' eyes bored into his, Severus noted his panicked look. Remus' panicked look reminded Severus of the look he had in the library after Severus told him that Sirius was in love with him.

Of course, amortentia. Severus was disappointed that he didn't identify it immediately. He was too busy focusing on the overwhelming scents of pine needles, petrichor, and James' lavender shampoo. It was the same one Severus used over the Christmas break, and he had grown to love it.

"Maybe a comparison is the best way to demonstrate how varied the effects of this potion can be without even drinking it. I think our head boy and girl are up for it," Slughorn nodded towards Lily and James, prompting them to describe what they could smell.

"For me, the potion smells like rosemary, green tea, and," Lily frowns, like she doesn't understand what she's smelling, "dandelions. They grow in a field near my house." She added the last part as an afterthought.

"Very good, 1 point to Gryffindor, and for our head boy?" Slughorn prompted again. James paused before answering.

"Burning wood, coconut, and..." James clenched his jaw and cleared his throat as he averted his gaze from the cauldron. "Seawater."

He lied about the last one. Severus had been around him long enough to recognise when he was blatantly lying. Slughorn replaced the lid on the cauldron and continued with the lesson.

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"Severus! Stay back, my boy," Slughorn said once the class ended. He suppressed a groan, and gestured to James that he'd meet with him later. The rest of the class filtered out. Severus gathered his books and walked to the front of the classroom.

"What is it, sir?" He asked.

"I wanted to inform you about our latest Slug Club party. I sent you an invitation by letter, but it seems to have gotten lost. You didn't respond, you see," Slughorn explained as he closed a textbook on his desk. Severus pursed his lips, he intentionally didn't respond to said letter.

He'd gone to some of Slughorn's parties and dinners in the past, but they weren't his kind of thing. Severus never knew what to do in formal settings, and he always felt like the odd one out. Looks like he didn't have a choice about avoiding the club this time.

"Well thank you for the invite, sir. When is it?" Severus asked.

"It's next Friday night. It's a dinner party, so any formal dress will do." Severus nodded and stepped back, eager to escape to his friends.

"Oh and Severus?" Slughorn called out after him. Severus halted in his tracks.

"Yes, sir?"

"This is going to be a big one, so bring another guest if you want. Maybe James Potter. That boy's going places, it'll be a good networking opportunity," Slughorn added the last part under his breath. Severus pretended he didn't hear it.

It was no secret that Slughorn hosted these events for his own gain. He invited only the best and the brightest in the senior school, looking to network with future leaders, politicians, and scholars. It's no surprise Slughorn wants him to bring James, he's a brilliant quidditch player and he's been offered an apprenticeship in transfiguration. Not many people can say that at such a young age.

Once Severus asked James, the next thing he needed to worry about was finding something to wear. In the past, he'd worn hand-me-downs and dress robes with fraying edges or holes in the sleeves. However this time he could plan a trip into Hogsmeade to get something a little more presentable, albeit still cheap.

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"The green brings out your eyes. Have I ever told you that green does that?" James complimented, dragging his eyes up and down over Severus' form. They stood outside the Great Hall at 6:30pm on the night of the dinner, Severus arranged it as an easy meeting place so they could arrive together. The two set off towards the dinner, James placed his hand on the small of Severus' back, gently guiding the way.

Severus donned new, black dress robes completed with green and silver embellishments. James insisted on buying him the new robes, and he bought himself the same set, although his was complete with red and gold details.

"Gryffindor pride," he had simply stated when Severus questioned him about the decision. "Besides, if I'm your date, we should at least be wearing matching outfits."

"You're not my date," Severus had flushed and quietly thanked James for the robes, forcing him to drop the subject. He wasn't ready to address whatever was developing between them, and this dinner situation didn't make anything easier.

Severus had begged Lily to attend Slughorn's dinner with him. She was a regular attendee, but like Severus, she had begun to wean herself away from Slughorn's elitist club.

Severus needed her to show up, he hardly knew any of the other members, and he certainly wasn't ready to deal with James dressed up like a high fashion model. He needed her to be his rock tonight, more than ever.

She promised him that she would be there, so Severus was hurt and disappointed when she wasn't already seated when they arrived. Severus and James were already late, and neither had seen Lily since noon.

A small room in the long gallery next to the middle courtyard hosted the dinner. Green and silver adornments hung around the room, a blazing red fire lit up the dark crevices, and a thick, green curtain blocked out the rays from the setting sun.

"Severus! And you brought our head boy, excellent decision," Slughorn smiled, chuffed at the sight of the two students. Severus felt all of the guests' eyes on them, making him more self aware than ever. He wasn't used to being scrutinised by a group of close to forty people, and standing next to James didn't make him look any better by comparison. James, however, looked unbothered

and used to the attention.

James' hand fell away from Severus' back as they neared the table. It was long and rectangular, designed for seating more guests than the usual circle table. A green and silver table cloth spread along the dark mahogany, and porcelain plates lined the edges. There were two seats saved near the end, in between Hufflepuff's Dustin McGraven and Slytherin's Beatrice Buchman.

James pulled out Severus' chair for him, a small gesture that he didn't miss. As Severus sank into his seat, he eyed two empty seats opposite them. They were saved for Lily and her guest. Lily told him that she was going to invite Marlene McKinnon. So much for that.

"Are you ok?" James whispered, lips almost brushing the shell of his ear. He reached out to brush a strand of black hair behind his ear, leaving a tingling sensation in his wake.

"I- I'll be fine," Severus shot back. He clenched his jaw and sat up straighter. He was *not* going to survive the night if James kept insisting on touching him.

Subconsciously, he knew that no one was looking at them anymore, but Severus felt as though dozens of pairs of eyes were searing into his skin.

"I thought you said Lily was going to be here too," James asked. He unbuttoned his overcoat and draped it over the back of his chair, leaving him in a black waistcoat over his long sleeved button up. Severus tried to keep his eyes away from the line of his waist, how broad his shoulders seemed by comparison-

"She was supposed to be here, she promised. I feel awkward at these dinners, they put me on edge and she helps me through them," Severus whispered back. He didn't explain the entire situation to James, he didn't want to provoke him over something so small. He was sure she had a good reason for skipping Slughorn's party. None of the others seated at the table paid attention to their hushed whispers, they were too busy conversing between themselves.

James frowned, and Severus' stomach flipped at the sight. James' hand clenched into a fist where it rested on the table, before relaxing and falling to his side. Severus hoped he didn't take it the wrong way, he was still glad James was there with him.

"So she bailed on you? Even though she knew how much you relied on her to be here?" James asked, clenching his jaw.

"It's fine, I guess. I have you here instead. I'm lucky that I have a friend like you, I don't say that often enough," Severus gave James a soft smile before turning away to eye the plates of food that suddenly appeared.

Severus watched out of the corner of his eye as an array of emotions crossed James' face. James clenched his jaw and picked up his fork, entirely ignoring Severus' moment of genuine appreciation for their friendship. He convinced himself that it didn't sting.

Meanwhile, James' stomach dropped. He still wasn't used to Severus being sentimental. In seven years, he almost always saw Severus as aloof, especially towards himself. In the past several months, he still hadn't gotten used to his hidden compassionate side towards those he truly cared about. In the past three weeks he'd been harder to read than ever.

At least he didn't need to address the night in the Astronomy tower now, Severus was quite clear with that statement. They were just friends. And that's all they would be.

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By the end of the night, Slughorn had inducted James into the Slug Club as an ordinary member rather than a special guest. As the guests began to rise from the table and dissipate into the night, Severus found himself in Regulus Black's company. From the snippets of conversation James could eavesdrop on, Regulus was asking about Sirius.

"I tried to talk to him at the start of the year, but he avoided me. I don't care that he ran away, or that he had a falling out with mum, he's still my brother," Regulus said in a defeated voice. He must be desperate to go to Severus for answers, him and Sirius still weren't all that close.

James darted out from the room, donning his overcoat as the cool, night air pierced his clothing and chilled his skin. White fog rose from his lips when he exhaled. He tucked his hands into his pockets and leaned against the wall. He waited for Severus, escorting him back down to the Slytherin quarters was the least he could do.

After a few minutes, Regulus exited the room. As he closed the door behind him, he looked over his shoulder and made eye contact with James. He averted his gaze to the floor and scurried away, shoulders drawn up near his ears. James sighed, he was half glad Regulus didn't try to talk to him; Sirius asked him to stay away from his younger brother.

As James followed his retreating figure with his eyes, a different person came into his line of sight from across the middle courtyard.

Lily, sitting under an archway with Marlene and Dorcas, looking as if she'd forgotten about the dinner entirely. James had to say something- he knew Severus wouldn't. He stormed over to the three girls, eyes set on Lily.

"It was nice of you to show up," James said, arms crossed over his chest. Lily whipped around to face him, she hadn't noticed his rapid approach. She furrowed her brow, racking her thoughts as to what he could be talking about, but suddenly her smile fell off her face. She swung her legs over the cobblestone bricks and pulled James away from her friends. Lily spared a quick glance over her shoulder to make sure they were out of earshot.

"I completely forgot about the slug club, I could've sworn he said he wasn't going," Lily frowned.

"Come on, Lils, you knew that he needed you there tonight. He said that you promised you'd be there for him, and just happened to forget? Is there something else I should know?" James asked, frowning down at the Head Girl.

"Well he had you there instead, isn't that good enough?" Lily shot back, cheeks flushing as James verbally berated her.

"That's besides the point-," James started, a little confused by her sudden jealousy.

"What's going on?" Severus asked. His sudden appearance made James jump and step back to face the Slytherin.

"Sev, I'm so sorry I forgot about the dinner. I didn't mean to forget, I swear," Lily said urgently.

"It's fine Lils, don't worry about it, I'll just drag you along to the next one," Severus replied.

"Wait, seriously? You're not going to do anything about it, even though she stood you up?" James asked. He just watched Severus badly suppress his nervous energy for the past hour and a half, he wasn't going to let this go as meekly as Severus did. James tried to suffocate his envy towards Lily,

but it wasn't working.

"James it's not a big deal, stop being an arse about it," Severus shot back. James flinched back, it had been a while since Severus had attacked him and meant it.

"It's the principle of the matter, Severus, I'm not being an arse about it-," James reached out to rest his hand on Severus' upper arm. Severus pulled his arm back and glared up at the Gryffindor boy.

James felt his face burn red, Severus had never shied away from contact before. From Lily's reaction, a furrowed brow and slightly agape mouth, this was beginning to look more and more like a lover's quarrel to her.

"I don't think I need to be here for this, I'll see you two around," Lily said as she began to back away, "once you two sort whatever this is out," she added under her breath. She ignored James attacking her character, he was obviously acting out of jealousy and she had an inkling that he'd apologise to her in the morning anyways.

Severus pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed as he watched Lily's retreating form. He rounded on James, who took a cautious step backwards.

"Why'd you have to attack her like that? I don't need you turning her against me, I'm perfectly capable of doing that myself," Severus said bitterly.

"Sev, you know I didn't mean it like that. It's just- you always put Lily on a pedestal, and I know you're walking on eggshells around her because you don't want your friendship to break again, but this?" James paused to gesture to the archway that Lily left through. "This is you setting yourself up to be walked over by everyone. We know Lily wouldn't do that, but what about everyone else Sev-"

"So clearly this is bigger than just Lily now, is there something you want to say to me?" Severus stepped forward, invading James' space, trying to make him uncomfortable. The red flush near his hairline and on the tips of his ears gave James' true feelings away.

"After everything you still put her above everything else, you still put her before me!" James snapped.

He winced in the following silence.

"What is *that* supposed to mean?" Severus snarled.

"I don't know, I just-"

"Of course you don't know. Figure your shit out, then come talk to me," Severus said with a note of finality. He turned on his heel then stalked away from James, out of sight with his chin held high.

James took his time walking back to the Gryffindor tower, the freezing air felt like a punishment.

# Breaking Off Wasn't Hard To Do (But I Could Not Stay Away From You)

## Chapter Summary

James finally comes clean. Severus has an encounter with Avery and Mulciber. Things come to a head in the Astronomy Tower.

## Chapter Notes

I'm so sorry that this chapter is a week overdue!! I made up for it by making this one longer though, so strap in!

Chapter Title from Guess I'm Dumb by Glen Campbell

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Severus avoided James at first. While he couldn't stop himself from stealing glances in the direction of the handsome Gryffindor boy, he was still furious at the way he spoke to Lily. Curiously enough, every time Severus looked over to James, he found that his unflinching gaze was already fixated on him.

What baffled Severus was how quickly James and Lily started talking again. It was as if James had never yelled at Lily in the first place. He saw them together in the Great Hall, in classes, and around the courtyard. Severus thought back to how Lily confessed she'd lost her feelings for James, but a strange twinge in his stomach tried to convince him that she was lying.

But Lily would never lie to him, that means something else had to be wrong. For a rare instance, Severus was at a loss.

In his newfound spare time, Severus began to study his patronus again. It had stayed in its new form, the doe, for over half a year and he was no closer to finding out why it changed in the first place. He scoured every book he could get his hands on for an insight into changing patronus forms, but he came up blank every time.

By the end of the third day, when Severus was about to leave the library for the night, James approached him. Severus watched as he pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose and eyed the open book on dementor defences.

"Dementors? Expecting a visitor from Azkaban anytime soon?" James asked.

Severus didn't humour him. "What is it?"

"Let's talk, unless you desperately need that knowledge on dementors," James said.

Severus bit his lip and eyed the open book. He was about to finish anyways, plus he knew he couldn't avoid James any longer.

"Sit," Severus said, gesturing to the chair next to him. He closed the book and placed it back on the

shelf behind the table. James hastily sank into the chair, not taking his eyes off the other.

"I spoke to Lily-"

"So I saw," Severus cut him off.

"Sev, please," James sighed, "I spoke to her and apologised. We talked everything out and found the real reason I lashed out at her."

"So you two-"

"Are still friends? Yeah, Lils said I had to try harder than that to annoy her," James chuckled. Severus furrowed his brow. The silence seemed to ferment, but Severus didn't know what to say. Instead, James rushed to fill the space.

"What I'm trying to say is I'm sorry," James said. Severus softened. James seemed sincere, and Severus wasn't really interested in dragging this out longer than it needs to be, especially if Lily harboured no hatred towards either of them for the way Friday night panned out.

"Ok, it's fine," Severus replied. He was more interested in what James meant earlier when he said he had found the 'real reason he lashed out at her'.

"No, it's not fine." James ran a hand through his hair. "I was just stirring shit up because-"

He paused and held his eyes shut as if he was scared of something. Severus almost teased him about how un-Gryffindor he looked, but a little voice in the back of his mind warned him that this was serious.

"Because?" Severus prompted.

James' eyes fluttered open again, wide and determined behind the lens of his glasses. "Because I was jealous."

Severus' fingers curled tightly into his robes, desperate to ground himself in any way.

"Why?"

James gave Severus a knowing look, lips pressed together in a thin line.

"You know why." Those three words finally confirmed the source behind James' strange behaviour for the past month.

Severus exhaled. Whatever he expected James to confess to, it wasn't *that*. He didn't know what to do. There was only one person who could help him make sense of this.

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"You knew!" Severus all but yelled to his fiery-haired friend.

"I knew?" Lily hesitantly agreed as the Slytherin stalked up to her.

After James awkwardly excused himself, Severus fled the library in search of Lily. He had an uncanny feeling that she knew more than she let on, that she had known James' true feelings this entire time.

"You knew James' true feelings towards me!" Severus restated. Lily smirked up at him.



"So he finally told you," Lily mused as he continued along her path away from the Great Hall.

Severus blinked as his step faltered. "Seriously? You would keep this from me?"

"If this is how you would have reacted, I think I made a wise choice." Severus frowned, Lily had a valid point.

"Is that the real reason you lost your feelings for him?" Severus asked. Lily sighed, averting her gaze to the ground.

"Yeah, once he worked out that he was gay, it didn't really make sense to continue after him. I gave up," Lily explained.

Severus paused, mulling over her words. "When did he tell you about all this?"

Lily halted and turned to face Severus. "Promise you won't get mad at me?"

"Of course," Severus said.

"I spoke to him about you and Mary. I helped him see that you were being truthful, and I pieced the rest together based on how he was talking about you," Lily explained.

"I told you to let me sort out that problem with Mary on my own."

"But without me, you two probably still wouldn't be talking," Lily countered. Severus pinched the bridge of his nose and hung his head. She was right, as per usual.

They walked in silence, Severus buried his hands in his pockets to keep himself from fidgeting. He kept glancing at Lily, anticipating her explanation of what James had said about him that betrayed his feelings to her, but it never came.

"How was he talking about me?" Severus pried.

"A better question is what are you going to do now?" Lily shot back, knocking Severus into silence.

"I don't know."

As Severus contemplated his options on how to proceed with James, he and Lily rounded the corner and almost knocked Professor Slughorn off his feet. Before either Severus or Lily could attempt to apologise, Slughorn clapped a hand down on the Slytherin's back.

"Severus! M'boy, I was looking for you. We didn't have a chance to talk on Friday night, and there's something I should discuss with you," he said. He fixed his beady eyes on Lily. "Hello Miss Evans, I'm afraid I'll have to steal young Severus away from you for a while. Don't worry, I'll return him to you in one piece."

Slughorn let out a pained chuckle before leading Severus away. They made a beeline for Slughorn's office. Once they reached their destination, Slughorn retrieved some papers from a drawer in his desk.

"It's about your future, and your clear aptitude for Potions. With work and grades like this, you are on the path to becoming the youngest Potions Master in history. That is, if you wanted to train under me," Slughorn explained. Severus blanched.

"Youngest Potions Master?"

"It's no secret that I'm getting old, m'boy. I've been in this job since well before you were born, and the Headmaster has been pushing me to find someone adept enough to take over one day," Slughorn continued.

Severus sat in stunned silence. He'd never considered teaching at Hogwarts before, and he wasn't sure if he wanted to at all. He was terrible around children, and they were often scared of him despite him being only a teenager.

"I recall you saying during our career counselling session last year that you haven't made any solid plans for life after graduation?" Slughorn questioned, Severus only nodded in response.

"Think of this as a fall back option then. If you haven't decided what you want to do once you have the results from your NEWTs, then you're more than welcome to contact me about some training," Slughorn concluded.

"Thanks for the offer, however I don't know if it's right for me, sir," Severus said.

"Nonsense, you already know all the content. Besides, I want the students to be in knowledgeable hands," Slughorn rebutted. "Have some time to think about it, m'boy."

Severus left shortly after, head torn between the two options. His heart, however, was still stuck on James Potter.

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He tried his hardest to stay away from James while he was trying to sort out his mess of emotions. It wasn't always easy, James would always catch his gaze from across the Great Hall or from the other side of a classroom.

Whenever James approached him, he kept the conversations short and sharp. He found excuses to get away from him, whether it was "astronomy revision" or "tutoring Slytherin fifth years," it seemed to work. He knew he was being unfair to James, but he didn't want to do anything rash in the presence of the Gryffindor and make everything worse.

Severus found solace underneath the oak tree in the courtyard with his Advanced Potions Making book. He leaned against the firm wood, head bowed as he triple checked his notes. He was making some revisions to a particularly nasty brew near the back of the book when he heard an angry voice call his name.

"Snape!" Severus felt momentary relief that it wasn't one of the Gryffindor boys, but his stomach dropped when he realised he'd shared a room with that timbre his entire schooling career.

Severus looked up to meet the deep blue eyes of Avery, squinting with ferocity. He was accompanied by Mulciber, slightly inebriated despite it being a school day, and gripping his wand so tightly his knuckles turned white.

"To what do I owe the pleasure?" Severus drawled, snapping his book shut. Avery drew out his own wand and jammed it underneath Severus' chin, forcing his head up.

He twisted the wood, scoring marks into Severus' skin with the splintered end. Severus felt for his own wand in his robes, sure enough, it was there as a precaution.

"We know you've always been this foul, but this has gone on long enough!" Avery spat.

"What are you talking about?" Severus racked his brains, trying to think of anything he'd done recently to piss them off.

"Don't play daft, you slimy git. You've evaded us and everyone else in your house this entire year in favour of the mudblood and your blood traitor boyfriend," Avery snarled. Severus blanched, that string of words grated on his ears until they felt like they were bleeding. He looked around to see if anyone else was paying attention to their discord. A few people were glancing over and whispering behind raised hands.

"Do you have worms in your brain, Avery? Don't act like you've ever spared me a second thought outside of annoying me for homework answers. You've never cared who I associated with in the past, so why has that changed now?" Severus spat back. He grabbed Avery by his elbow and dug his thumb into the groove as he pushed him away. Avery hissed in discomfort, but kept his wand drawn.

"*He* is watching us, you've brought the house of Slytherin enough shame by being half mudblood, and we don't think he'd appreciate you running around with blood traitors as well. We just want to make sure you pick the right side when the time comes," Avery said. Severus furrowed his brow, he wasn't making any sense. Mulciber nodded along to what Avery was spurring, though his vacant expression told Severus he was more interested in picking a fight.

"You mean the side that kills people they deem 'unworthy'? I'd rather drop dead than join the side of a murderous psychopath with a superiority complex," Severus retaliated. He drew his wand from his pocket just in time to block a dark curse Avery sent his way. The fizzling sound of wayward hexes drew in a crowd of intrigued students, eager to watch the growing fight.

Severus dodged a curse, it flew straight passed his ear and collided into the tree behind him. Severus glanced back at the loud sound it made and caught the fearful eyes of Remus Lupin in the growing crowd. Remus suddenly stepped forward and drew his wand, blocking an oncoming curse that he'd been too distracted to block himself. Severus swivelled back around as Remus joined his side.

The shouting and murmuring in the crowd reaches its peak once Lupin disarmed both Avery and Mulciber, bringing their wands through the air to fall at his feet. Severus opens his mouth to berate his Slytherin housemates before he's cut off by a disturbed gasp.

"Can someone tell me what's going on here?" Lily asked. James followed suit, fixing Avery and Mulciber with an uncharacteristically cold stare. Even though the icy look wasn't directed at him, Severus felt a chill race down his spine. The crowd dispersed, leaving the six by themselves.

"What's it to you, mudblood?" Mulciber sneered. Lily's face fell, and a pang of anger punched Severus in the stomach.

"Don't use that word!" Severus raised his wand again, but Remus pulled his arm back down. Severus spare a glance at Lily, her mouth quirked up in a grateful smile.

"We're taking this to Dumbledore, so I think you two better get your story straight on why you tried to attack Severus," James warned.

Avery grimaced, red-faced with rage, and yelled, "You coward! Hiding behind your blood traitor friends as usual."

Severus tried to defend himself before James spoke over him. "I wouldn't push my luck, Avery. There's four of us and only two of you." James squared his shoulders, drawing his own wand in the process. Avery eyed the wand before he turned and shoved Mulciber back by his shoulder. They slinked off, and Severus watched as James visibly relaxed.

“Are you alright? I was trying to find you to return this book and I saw it all unfold, it was pretty rough,” Lupin shot him a concerned look. He handed over a potions book from Severus' personal collection that he lent to Remus a week ago.

“Yeah, but I could've handled it myself,” Severus replied in a teasing manner. He's glad Remus was there to help him, but teasing Remus help alleviate the tension that was still coursing through his system.

“I know, I couldn't let you have all the glory,” Remus said. The two chuckled before Remus turned his attention to Lily. She was about to depart to Dumbledore's office to inform him of the incident, Remus agreed to accompany her.

As the two retreated from the courtyard, James walked over to Severus, still reeling from the attack.

“Are you ok?” James asked. Severus couldn't bare to meet James' eyes; he kept his gaze averted to the ground. He wasn't in the mood to be pitied.

“I'm fine.”

“Are you sure? Those bastards are lucky I wasn't there from the beginning-”

“I said I'm fine,” Severus snapped. He winced, realising how harsh his words sounded. “I'm sorry, I have a meeting with Slughorn, I have to go.”

“But-,” James tried to follow after Severus, but he refused to look back.

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James was at a loss. After the incident in the courtyard, Severus went back to avoiding him. That was the most he'd spoken to him in a number of days beforehand. The following night, James decided that enough was enough. He was tired of trying to chase after Severus during the day, he needed to seek him out at night so he couldn't use any excuses not to speak to him.

In the Gryffindor boys' dorm room, James pulled the Marauder's Map from Sirius' bedside drawers. He scoured the map and located his Slytherin friend at the top of the Astronomy tower.

James donned his invisibility cloak and snuck past his friends in the common room. As he wove through the corridors of the castle, he realised he hadn't planned anything to say to Severus. All he wanted was for things to go back to normal, before he told him how he truly felt.

James crept past Filch, holding an oil lamp and standing perfectly still at the base of the tower. He tried to pace himself as he ascended the winding staircase, he didn't want to suddenly burst into the top of the tower and startle Severus.

He finally reached the top. James pulled off his invisibility cloak and hung it on the railing at the top of the staircase. Severus was leaning against the stone wall on the other side of the room, head bowed and lost in a book. How he could see in this light was beyond James.

“Strange time to be doing homework,” James said softly, trying not to startle him. It didn't work; Severus jumped, almost dropping his book in the process. James took a cautious step around the side of the metal contraption in the centre of the room.

“Not that I'm surprised, Astronomy?” James asked. When Severus didn't respond, James continued.

"I swear I'm not a stalker, I just had to talk to you," he explained, raised his hands in defence.

"How did you find me here?" Severus asked, wasting no time with James' small talk. James' stomach twisted, was he really trying this hard to avoid him?

"Do you even have to ask?" James replied with a shrug. Severus exhaled and briefly looked over his shoulder to the night sky behind him. His homework would have to wait for now.

"Right, the Marauder's Map," Severus said. He closed his book and placed it with his other belongings as they lapsed into a painful silence. James cleared his throat and took another step around the floating metal device to face Severus.

"First of all, it *sucks* that you're avoiding me," James said bluntly. Severus stood motionless, his dark eyes traced on James' face with an element of intensity.

"I put myself out there," James ticked off what he was saying on his fingertips, "and I was honest with you...and for that I get the silent treatment?" His words hung heavily in the air as he slowly moved closer to Severus. They were only a metre apart.

"Even if you don't feel the same way, you can at least be there for me as a friend," James said. His eyes stung with tears as anger bubbled beneath the surface. Anger at Severus for ignoring him for nearly a week without saying why, and anger at himself for causing this mess in the first place.

"You're making me feel crazy!" James tried to contain his aggression, but with Severus standing in front of him not reacting to anything he was saying, it felt like a losing battle. As angry as he was, he couldn't help but admire how Severus' skin seemed to glow in the moonlight, making him look more ethereal than ever.

He didn't know what to say to make Severus react, he just wanted him to say something, *anything*, instead of staying silent as James poured his heart out. James monitored Severus' stoic expression; when it remained unchanged, he continued.

"Honestly, if I knew that you were going to be all weird and that this was going to jeopardise our friendship, I *never* in a million years would have told you how I felt." James drew in a shaky breath, raising a hand to his chest.

"Because it is becoming incredibly clear that you don't feel the same way--"

A pale, elegant hand grasped his red and gold tie and pulled him forward, closing the gap between them with a searing kiss. James froze for half a second, shocked as he tried to remember every sensation in case this was the only time this would happen. Severus pulled away, but kept close as he scanned James' face for any sign of emotion.

James merely grinned and pulled Severus in by his waist to reconnect their lips. The feeling of Severus' mouth on his made James' heart race like he was thousands of feet in the air. Severus brought a calloused palm to James' jawline, cradling his face and leaving a burning sensation along his skin. He dug his fingertips into Severus' waist as he threaded his fingers into James' hair, deepening the kiss.

James quietly moaned at the sensation of Severus' fingers tightening in his hair. With a flick of his tongue, James turned the passionate kiss hot and heavy, they moved with desperation and lust. James moved forward, guiding Severus backwards until his back collided with the stone wall. James drove his thigh between Severus' legs, pinning him to the wall with his hands on his hips. The motion drew a low moan from Severus' throat, reverberating through James and making him

grip his hips tighter.

They broke apart to breathe and rested their foreheads together, James didn't immediately release Severus. James pulled back a bit so he could properly look at Severus' flushed cheeks and red lips.

"So?" James asked. They stood in each others arms, catching their breath.

"I don't know," Severus replied after a moment, eyes tracing James' lips once more. James smiled, causing Severus to smile along with him. Soon after that they were laughing together as James enveloped Severus' hands in his own.

Now that James knew what true bliss felt like, he never wanted to be without it.

## Chapter End Notes

It finally happened!! Don't worry though, there's still a bit more drama and a touch of angst to come.

Drop a kudos or comment below if you're enjoying things so far!

# Everything About You Is So Overwhelming

## Chapter Summary

Severus and James spend some time together figuring out where they stand with each other. James and Marlene have a moment of solidarity. Sirius and Remus interlude at the end.

## Chapter Notes

Only a few more chapters to go!

Chapter Title is from Overwhelming by Jon Bellion.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"You could have told me to bring a scarf before you dragged me out here," Severus chastised. James, who was busy working on a heating charm for his jacket, hummed in response. James had convinced Severus to come with him out to the Quidditch pitch just before the sunset. The cold air had nipped at Severus' fingertips and James' ears all day, but that hadn't deterred the Gryffindor from his plans.

"Once I put a bit of heating magic on your clothes you'll forget all about your scarf," James said. On a day as skin-piercingly cold as this one, a bit of insulation went a long way. James muttered an incantation and ripples of warmth spread out from the sides of Severus' coat to the ends of his limbs.

He hummed appreciatively, pulling his coat around him tighter still. They spiralled around the inner staircase until they reached the top of one of the seating towers, facing the sun. The cool breeze made Severus' cheeks numb and red, but he barely noticed the dull sensation as he slid his hand into James'.

They sat together, watching the sky fade from blue to a mix of yellow and pink hues. Severus was content. Several days ago, he worked up the gall to kiss James in the Astronomy tower, and everything had been fairytale perfect. If it had happened to somebody else, Severus would have gagged as they recounted the events.

"You know, you didn't make things easy for me," Severus said. James raised a brow, facing the Slytherin.

"How?"

"You kept saying that you're glad we're friends now. Friends, friends, friends. That word began to feel like a slug in the gut."

"Well what was I supposed to say?" James laughed.

"I don't know, the truth?" Severus asked.

"When I told you the truth, you ran away," James pointed out. Severus swallowed and paused.

"That's true, I guess I didn't make it easy on you either," Severus replied.

"Hey, it's alright, you came around," James leaned forward, palms on his knees as he bit his bottom lip.

Severus let out a sigh at the sight. "I don't know how we spent so many years being at each other's necks."

James' face fell for a moment. He pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose and hummed.

"I'm still trying to convince myself that this is all real. That you won't just wake up someday and come to your senses," James confessed.

"This is real, don't fret your pretty head, Potter," Severus teased. He wrapped an arm around James' neck and pulled him into a gentle kiss. A broad hand found its resting place on Severus' waist, pulling him closer still.

There was an air of peace atop the Quidditch stands, Severus didn't want to leave. He didn't want to go back to sticking to the shadows when he was apart from James to avoid his own vindictive roommates. The hot pressure of James' lips trailing his jawline brought him back into the moment. He suppressed a moan as those lips found their way to the side of his neck.



"Maybe we should head back," Severus said a while later, "it's starting to get dark already."

James slumped against Severus and groaned. The Slytherin stood up, James wrapped his arms around his thighs and rested his head on his hip as he tried to drag him back down.

"Let go, I'm serious."

"Fine, but when you complain about your cold hands in a few minutes, I'm not helping you out." James rose with his nose in the air.

Sure enough, as they were halfway back to the castle, Severus felt a numb chill settle in on his fingertips. The sensation raced up his fingers and through his palms. He only had to give James a look before the Gryffindor clutched his cold hands. They stopped walking and James concentrated on massaging heat back into his digits. James bowed his head and placed a kiss on the knuckles of both of his hands.

"Hope this pleases m'lord," James spoke in an overly pompous accent that was too close to his real voice to be anything but self-deprecating.

"Shut up." Severus couldn't suppress the small smile that crept onto his face as James laced their fingers together and kept walking.

There was an unspoken agreement that they were taking things slow. Testing the waters before diving in head first. As far as Severus knew, James hadn't told anyone from his immediate group of friends. The past year had disheveled Severus' worldview and social standing enough, he didn't need a public relationship with the Gryffindor Quidditch star to bring further attention to himself. He didn't want to be the subject of Howlers from obsessive exes and jealous girls.

That wasn't to say that he didn't relish in the way James treated him now. Their friendship had virtually stayed the same, albeit the addition of kissing to their repertoire made Severus long for something more. He just wasn't ready yet.

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"Are you sure you don't want me to walk with you back to the Slytherin quarters?" James asked.

"If that were the case, I wouldn't have just walked you up to the Gryffindor tower," Severus

replied. He raised a valid point, but James was hesitant to leave him for the night.

They rounded the corner and found themselves in the corridor leading to the portrait of the Fat Lady. James stopped and pulled Severus back by his sleeve.

"Bye," they said in unison. They grinned for a moment before they enveloped each other in a tight hug. James felt rather sheepish as he pulled away, he held Severus' hands in his own and brushed a thumb over his knuckles to prolong his final farewell.

He debated for half a second whether or not he should kiss Severus goodnight, but decided to kiss the raven-haired boy anyways. When he pulled away, he noticed the childlike mirth in Severus' dark eyes. It was so unbecoming of the man's usual temperament that James was unsure if he'd ever see that look again. He tried as hard as possible to commit to memory the way his eyes crinkled when he smiled.

Severus turned the corner and disappeared from view, James lingered for a moment, not ready to go back to the common room for the night just yet. He turned back around and began to walk to the portrait, still down the end of the long corridor. He shoved his hands in his pockets and kept his eyes on his feet as a smirk pulled at the corners of his mouth.

"So is he your boyfriend now?" James nearly tripped over his own feet at the sound of Marlene McKinnon's voice. He lifted his head and spotted Marlene leaning against the wall next to the portrait. She had one leg propped up against the wall and her arms folded over her chest with a sly expression on her face.

"Merlin, Marlene, warn a person!" James loosened his tie, it was beginning to feel like a tightening noose around his neck.

"That I'm leaning against the wall? Ok, I'm leaning against the wall. So are you two together?" Marlene persisted. James swallowed as he paced over to Marlene, thinking of something to say. He looked over his shoulders to see if anyone else was around that he hadn't spotted yet.

Marlene was one of Lily's best friends, so naturally her and James had a rocky relationship. James liked Marlene, sure, but she had always been short with him. From the chatter he'd heard between the Gryffindor girls over the years, plus Mary's poisonous gossip, Marlene probably disliked Severus more.

Marlene quirked an eyebrow, James had to think of something to say, and quick.

"I mean, we're not...but would that be a problem if we were?" James asked cautiously.

Whatever James expected, it wasn't for Marlene's face to soften into a gentle smile.

"No, but you know what?" Marlene pushed herself away from the wall and looked up to James.

"He doesn't seem so bad. If James Potter likes him and he's a Slytherin? That's saying something."

"That's it? You don't take issue with anything else?" James danced around the subject, not explicitly addressing the elephant in the room. He could now treat Marlene as a test run of sorts, to gauge her reaction to see if he should bother coming out to people outside of the Marauders.

"Come on, James. You should know I'm the last person to take issue with the fact that you two are both men," Marlene rolled her eyes. James reeled back.

"Wait, are you saying-"

"That I'm gay too? It's not exactly a secret," Marlene smirked. She raised her hand to scratch at her hair, disturbing her curls. "I won't tell anyone about you and Snape. Goodnight."

She disappeared behind the portrait before he could question her further.

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James couldn't wait to find Severus the next day. Marlene's words were burned into his mind, and he couldn't wait to divulge them to his friend. It was comforting to know that they weren't the only gay students at Hogwarts, although Remus and Sirius hid in plain sight too.

He spotted Severus in the Great Hall around midday. Cradling a book, he sat alone at the end of the Slytherin table. James sat across from Severus, the latter only looked up when James banged his open palms on the table. He jumped in his seat a bit, spooked after being suddenly ripped away from the riveting world of 'Illyius and the Patronus Charm'.

"Potter," Severus greeted snidely. The small smile he gave after he spoke undercut his tone.

"Snape," James shot back, failing to make his greeting sound as scathing as Severus'.

"To what do I owe the pleasure?" Severus asked. He closed his book and placed it on the sturdy, wooden table. Severus feigning coldness in their greetings had become somewhat of a custom for them. Anyone looking from the outside in might think they were about to draw their wands; their cyclic friendship had kept everyone guessing whether this was all some big rouse. They were the only two who knew the truth.

"So, last night after you left for the dungeons, Marlene spoke to me about us. Turns out she saw us together, and she seemed happy for us. It was really weird considering that she didn't like me for ages because of how I chased after Lily," James explained. With every word Severus' face fell from that bemused expression into a look of contorted ire.

"Merlin," he muttered and grabbed his book. He rose from the table and stormed away. James shot up and chased after Severus. He reached him in the doorway of the Great Hall, clasping a hand on his shoulder to pull him back.

"What's wrong?" James asked. Severus looked around before he wrapped a hand around James' bicep and dragged him into a more secluded alcove.

"*What's wrong* is that I don't feel like broadcasting my personal business to the student body," Severus said darkly. He was flushed and kept looking past James' shoulder as though he expected someone to intrude on their conversation. James reeled back, that wasn't the response he expected.

"It was just Marlene, she's gay too if that gives you peace of mind," James argued.

"That's not it-" Severus sighed.

"It's not *me* is it?" James hesitantly asked.

"What? No James, of course not," Severus defended. He pinched the bridge of his nose, James watched as a calm resolve settled into his features again.

"I know that whatever this is isn't like your previous flings, but this is *entirely* new to me," Severus slowly explained. "I've never done this before, so can we just take it slow?"

"I thought we were already taking it slow," James smirked.

"Even slower then?"

"Of course."

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Remus placed a large log in the Gryffindor fireplace, sending embers into the air as it landed and rolled to the back. Hopefully it was enough to keep the flames burning throughout the night. He sunk back into the plush armchair directly opposite Sirius. The common room was empty, it was nearing 1am.

Remus contemplated the other man. Sirius was resting his cheek in his palm, propped up by an elbow on the arm of the chair. His eyes had slipped shut and his breathing has reached a slow, steady pace. Remus watched the gentle rising and falling, rising and falling of his chest.

"Are you still awake, Padfoot?" Remus asked. Sirius' eyes fluttered open and he yawned.

"Barely, but I don't want to leave yet. It's too warm here." He leaned forward and held his hands in front of the flames. He rubbed them together to generate even more heat.

"Hey, you know what happened today?" Sirius started as he leaned back into his chair. Remus shook his head. "Dorcas asked me out."

Remus clenched his jaw.

"Really? Wow, I'm happy for you," Remus tried to sound sincere. Sirius grimaced.

"What? No, I rejected her," he said. Sirius chuckled, then continued, "I was taking too long to ask her out, apparently. She couldn't take it anymore, but I didn't even know she felt that way about me."

"So why'd you turn her down?"

"Seriously, Moony?" Sirius asked. Remus frowned, Sirius was annoyed by his question but Remus doesn't know why. He nodded, prompting Sirius to continue.

Sirius sighed, bringing his hand to his forehead. "Because I'm holding out for someone else."

Remus ignored the pang of jealousy in his stomach, it didn't mean anything.

"Who?"

"I'm going to go to bed," Sirius stood up abruptly, "feel free to come up anytime. Goodnight, Moony." Sirius patted Remus' shoulder as he passed. He relished in the burning sensation it left behind.

Remus waited until Sirius ascended the spiralling staircase to the dorms before he dropped his calm façade. He sighed, shoulders slumping downward, and tried to keep his angry and confused tears at bay as he drew his knees to his chest. He stayed curled up in the chair until he was certain Sirius would be asleep, then left the common room for the night.

## Chapter End Notes

I don't think I've said this yet but I'm also semi-active over on tumblr  
@invisiblebookreader

Come say hi!

# Please Don't Go, I Love You So

## Chapter Summary

There's an altercation after a Quidditch match. James pours his heart out to Remus and Sirius. James gives Severus an ultimatum.

## Chapter Notes

So I created a spotify account and a playlist to go along with this fanfiction. The link is [here!](#)

The first four songs are the main songs that inspired this fic, the next several songs are some of the more relevant chapter title songs, and the rest are songs that I listened to while writing this. I hope you enjoy!

Chapter title is from Breezeblocks by Alt-J.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The early morning fog settled on James' skin and steam rose from his breath when he panted. He was leading the Gryffindor Quidditch team on an early morning jog around the castle grounds. The sun was yet to break the horizon, and the freezing air helped to soothe their flushed skin. James had a one track mind; crushing the Slytherin team in the Quidditch semi-finals.

Sirius was mindlessly babbling in his ear next to him, prattling away about his new swinging technique. It amazed James how Sirius managed to talk and run at the same time without breaking a sweat or losing his breath. His cardio must have improved once he began his Animagus transformations into Padfoot.

"Are you worried about the Slytherin team? I heard MacNair has a new broom, it could have made him a bit more adept at being a keeper," Sirius said.

"I wouldn't waste my galleons betting on MacNair, our Mackenzie can fly circles around that oaf," James laughed. Mackenzie, the Gryffindor keeper, heard James' comment and let out a throaty laugh.

Minutes later, the sun broke out above the horizon and began to melt the frost-tipped grass. It had been a chilling night, James hoped that frostbite had settled on Regulus Black's fingers overnight so he couldn't catch the snitch in today's match. Given Black's track record, he would be surprised if

Regulus even saw the snitch today.

Several hours after the Gryffindor team's morning routine, the match was ready to start. Almost all of Hogwarts lined the Quidditch stands, waving an assortment of red and green banners and whooping chants at the top of their lungs. There was an overwhelming amount of red; Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff were keen to see Slytherin lose their chance at winning the House Cup.

James scanned the crowd as the Gryffindor team circled the pitch. A head of smooth, black hair stood out amongst the sea of red. James smiled down at Severus, he was glad he took up Lily's invite to join her and the rest of the Marauders in the stands amongst the Gryffindor supporters. He usually skipped Quidditch games, but James managed to persuade him to attend with a fair amount of kissing and begging.

The commentator's voice rang through James' ears, another chaser threw the Quaffle to him, and he dashed through the air towards the goals.

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"Perkins has caught the snitch! Gryffindor win, 210-40!"

James nearly collided with Sirius as he raced over to celebrate. He clapped a hand on Sirius' back before flying over to Perkins to praise him for catching the snitch. The crowd roared as the two teams landed on the pitch. James had his eyes trained on the stands; Remus, Severus, Lily, and Marlene were already starting to make their way down to the pitch.

Once the team landed, they all but jumped on each other, cheering and chanting along with the stands. James lead the team out of the pitch towards the changing rooms, Sirius tried to launch himself up onto James' back but he shook him off. Throngs of people surrounded the team on the grass outside, and the team members' friends followed them into the changing tent. As Sirius' hollering echoed in his ears, James sought out Severus.

James didn't have to look too hard, the foursome from the stands had reunited with them in the tent. Remus ran up to Sirius and threw his arms around his waist. He hoisted Sirius into the air and spun him around before letting him down. James barely noticed, his eyes were trained on the way Severus' mouth quirked up into a small smile.

James lunged towards Severus and tackled him into a hug. James rocked on the spot as he delved his fingers into Severus' velvety tresses, still panting with adrenaline as his hair warmed his fingertips. He tried to will away the thoughts of how sweaty he was, he hoped Severus didn't mind.



His hands made their way down to the small of his back, and Severus pulled his face out of the crook of James' neck. James fought the excitement in his stomach when he realised he could kiss Severus right now if he wanted to. Everyone was too busy celebrating, no one would notice if James suddenly decided to kiss his friend in mirth. James' eyes dropped to his mouth again, he wanted nothing more than to join their lips and collapse in his arms.

James subconsciously brought his hand to Severus' jaw, rubbing a thumb over his smooth bottom lip. Severus startled back, cheeks flushing as a firm scowl marred his features.

"What are you doing?" Severus muttered, eyes frantically sweeping around the tent to see who was paying attention.

"Nothing, I'm-," James' chest heaved, "I'm celebrating."

"I thought we settled this, I don't want to advertise my personal business to the world," Severus said, venom dripping from every word. James frowned and reached out to grab Severus' forearm, but he bat his hand away.

"I'm not trying-"

"I just-," Severus cut him off, "I need some air." He didn't look back as he disappeared through the white fabric of the tent opening.

---

"Prongs, are you with us?" Sirius asked.

Sirius, Remus, and James were crowded around the Gryffindor fire later that night. The rest of the house were still rowdy with excess excitement, but James gave up trying to feign happiness once the night fell. He felt hollow and confused, and no amount of smuggled alcohol could ease the tightness in his chest.

The conversation between the threesome dwindled after Sirius' question. James felt his face burn as two sets of eyes focused on him. The air grew thick and heavy. He took a swig of his drink.

"I kissed someone," he confessed softly. Sirius' eyebrows shot up, his eyes were suddenly agog and alert. Remus, however, gave James an unperturbed look.

"What? Who?" Sirius questioned, his voice low.

"Does it matter?" James answered in the same low tone.

"Hey, it's good that you've moved on from Mary, but who? You can't half tell us," Sirius pressed.

"Severus," James breathed.

Sirius set his can down on the table next to him. James cautiously met his bewildered gaze.

"No-, what?" Sirius asked incredulously. Remus merely chuckled, catching both of their attention.

"You know, James, I called it when I saw the two of you in the library together," Remus said. Sirius made a noise of confusion in the back of his throat. He picked his can back up and took a swig, grimacing slightly.

"Yeah, thanks for that Moony, I think you traumatised the both of us," James chuckled, leaving a faint smile on his face. Sirius, however, was not amused.

"Does someone want to tell me what the bloody hell is going on?" Sirius finally snapped, his lips curled into a snarl that somehow didn't spoil his handsome features.

"A few weeks ago, McGonagall sent me to find James for her. I found him in the library with Severus, and I interrupted some vulnerable, relationship-defining moment. That much was evident from how guilty they both looked," Remus supplied. James reddened at the memory of that day, he wouldn't be forgetting that moment any time soon.

Sirius nodded slowly, mulling over the words. "You kissed Snape, and I'm going to take an educated guess and say that it's happened more than once, so what's the problem? He's already proved himself to be an alright man, seeing that he reconnected with Lily and how you've taken such a liking to him, so it's got to be something else. What are you sulking about?"

James sighed and slumped further into the fabric of the armchair. He took another swing.

"Severus is himself around me, but once we're around other people, he acts completely different. It's almost like he's ashamed of me, or like he's scared of something. He won't tell me what's wrong and I don't know what to do," James let out a groan as he cradled his head in his free hand. He mumbled, "I'm pining after a hot and cold mess of a person."

Remus spared a sidelong glance at Sirius, then cleared his throat. "It sounds like it's something he needs to work through by himself. If he only recently realised he's into guys, he probably has a lot of shit to work through while he tries to come to terms with his feelings for you. Give him time, he'll sort his emotions out soon enough."

James doubted it, Severus wasn't renowned for being adept and in touch with his emotions.

"And how would you know this, Moony? Seems awfully specific," Sirius mused. Remus suddenly became very interested in finishing off his drink, before rising from his chair to find another one.

In Remus' absence, Sirius asked, "What do you think that was about?"

James groaned, pushing his glasses up the bridge of his nose for the umpteenth time that night. "Sirius, I'm only going to say it once; You're in love with Remus, and you need to tell him. It's overkill at this point."

It was Sirius' turn to finish the rest of his drink. "I have no idea what you're talking about."

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Hogwarts was warm and uncharacteristically peaceful, James didn't see Severus all Sunday. James had time to mull over Remus' insightful albeit self-reflective speech. It was Monday when James saw Severus next.

The Head Boy was at the base of the Grand Staircase early Monday morning. Transfiguration was up first and James had no intention on being late, unlike Sirius who was still lazing about in the Great Hall. James figured Sirius was avoiding Remus, but when James mentioned this, Sirius merely scowled in silence.

James spotted Severus first, leaning against the base of the staircase with a familiar aloof expression. Once the Slytherin spotted him, he walked over to James with his back straight, weaving through the clumps of people. His eyes darted around, a dark black contrasting against his ivory skin. Even when James was mad at him, he couldn't help but admire Severus' striking features.

"Can we talk?" For the first time ever, James witnessed Severus Snape looking as close to remorseful and guilt-ridden as possible. James steeled himself, he couldn't back down from what he wanted to say just because he had fallen weak for those piercing eyes and high cheekbones. Even his soothing baritone brought goosebumps to his arms and sent pleasant chills down his spine.

James brushed away the sensation and focused on the issue at hand.

"No, but I need to say this," he inhaled shakily, "I like you Severus. I *really* like you, it's not a secret. But this has to stop. You clearly have something you need to work through, and that's fine. Merlin, it's *more* than fine, but you can't keep jerking me around like this."

James ran a hand through his hair, the other resting on his hip. Severus was stunned into silence, lips parted slightly. James struggled to rip his eyes away from the tempting sight.

"One minute, you act like you're into me, and the next you're acting like you don't want to be seen near me. I can't keep doing this, Severus. You need to decide what you want," James said. He hoped that Severus still wanted to associate himself with him if he decided this was all too much. Cutting Severus completely out of his life would be too painful.

James hoisted his book bag strap higher onto his shoulder and made his way towards the staircase. His stomach clenched when Severus didn't respond. As selfish as it was, James wanted Severus with every fibre in his body. He didn't want to hide their affections, he didn't care what anyone thought of them. Sirius, Remus, and Lily already knew, that's all he cared about.

Just as James reached the bottom of the staircase, already resigning himself to a horrible day, that deep voice sounded from behind him.

"Potter!" Severus called. James stopped in his tracks. He winced, the last thing he wanted to do was to revert back to a last-name basis with Severus. James tensed as he turned around, preparing himself for Severus' wrath.

Severus strode over to James, face set with a look of determination. The last thing he expected Severus to do was to grab James' tie and pull him forward into a fervent kiss. Yet that is exactly what he did, almost knocking James into a sixth year Hufflepuff girl in the process. They didn't care.

The kiss was like coming home after being away for a long time and James couldn't get enough. Severus was the first one to pull away. He met James' eyes, scanning for a hint of emotion. James remained passive for a moment longer, chest rising and falling in time with Severus'.

"I'm done being strange, James," Severus said. James grinned down at him.

"*That* was pretty strange." He couldn't keep the amusement from his voice if he tried.

"Do you forgive me?"

James considered the man before him; Pale cheeks flushed a rosy hue, eyes wide as they ran over James' lips several times, and hand still wrapped around his Gryffindor tie.

James adjusted his glasses and rolled his eyes overzealously as he grinned once more. He threw an arm around Severus' thin shoulders, pulling him in close, before they ascended the stairs to transfiguration.

## Chapter End Notes

Only two more chapters to go now! I hope you've enjoyed it this far, comment below if you would like because I love to hear from you guys! The next chapter will be quit long, and the last one will be shorter than a normal chapter but longer than an epilogue.

# And We Kissed As Though Nothing Would Fall

## Chapter Summary

A Quidditch cross Seventh Year celebration takes place in the Gryffindor Common Room. Severus steps out of his comfort zone.  
CW: Alcohol.

## Chapter Notes

Chapter Title from Heroes by David Bowie.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Mid Autumn came around and James would be lying if he said he wasn't slightly nervous for the final Quidditch match of his time at Hogwarts. Breakfast was tense, he took small sips of pumpkin juice, his hand shook as he picked up his cup.

Sirius, however, was already acting like they won. He was convinced that Ravenclaw was no match against the Gryffindor team. Between mouthfuls of toast, he spoke about the celebration party that he had planned for later in the night in the Gryffindor common room.

"For all this talk of partying, if we end up losing today, you owe me 10 galleons," James said.

"Oh, calm down, Prongs," Sirius rolled his eyes, "There's no way we're gonna lose today."

Sirius was right, as he so often is.

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George Harrison's voice resonated from the gramophone, bouncing off the red and gold adorned walls. Lily Evans' muggle records proved to be a hit with the Purebloods who had never heard The Beatles before.

The different house colours lit up the room, from the comforting yellows of Hufflepuff, to the calming blues of Ravenclaw, even to the deep greens of several of the more easygoing Slytherins that weren't off-put by Gryffindors. It was tradition for the seventh years of the winning Quidditch team to host a party before the NEWTs, it was a final celebration before their exams and graduation. Sirius had been bouncing off the walls all night, overjoyed that the Gryffindors got to

organise everything this year.

Severus was among the few Slytherins who decided to show up. He opted for black slacks and a green knit sweater. From across the room, James took in his strong features: the cut of his cheekbones; the elegant slope of his aquiline nose; his glossy, black hair. He grinned when Severus spotted him back. He abandoned the other Slytherin and weaved through the softly swaying crowd.

"I knew I'd be able to get you into the Gryffindor domain one day," James said.

"Please, that was bound to happen any day now." Severus shot him a patronising look. "So where are the rest of your posse? I can see Lily flipping the vinyl over there, but there's no sign of the oblivious duo."

"Vinyl?" James asked. He followed Severus' line of sight to Lily, spinning the record in the air before placing it down on the gramophone again.

"Another name for a record. I thought you took Muggle Studies once," Severus mocked.

"Hey! We have records too you know, it must be a muggle thing to call them vinyls. Besides, I dropped Muggle Studies after one week, they hadn't explored the realm of muggle music in that time," James said. "I haven't seen Remus since the start of the night, and Sirius left to get a new drink some time ago. You wouldn't have to ask me if you showed up on time."

"I thought it was appropriate to show up late to these things." James scoffed as Severus' smug expression, but his reply was cut off by Sirius' loud declaration a metre over.

"You fucking dickhead, Remus! I love you!" Sirius crashed his lips onto Remus', pulling him in by the collar of his shirt. James could see Remus' eyes widen before he kissed Sirius back.

"About time," Severus muttered next to James. James silently agreed. He brought his fingers to his lips and let out a wolf whistle. Frank Longbottom clapped a hand on Sirius' shoulder as he passed, but neither of them paid attention. Frank approached Severus and James, standing on James' right.

"You don't think they'd take it to a different room if I asked, do you?" Frank chuckled.

"I wouldn't interfere, this has been a long time coming," James said. "Besides, I don't think they need us prompting them to leave the common room. I think I'll be crashing on the couch tonight."

Frank laughed and nodded before he left, making a beeline towards Alice and a group of Hufflepuff girls.

James brought his half-empty can to his lips and froze. "I haven't gotten you a drink yet, would you like anything?"

"Oh- I've never- I don't know. What would you recommend?" Severus asked slowly.

"We've got beer and more beer." James reached into a nearby esky and tossed Severus a can. He opened it and took a small sip.

"Tastes like shit," he grimaced.

"Been tasting a lot of shit lately?" James teased. Severus groaned and elbowed his side.

"You know what I mean."

"Maybe if you spoke to your best friend, he could've brought along something stronger," James said.

Severus raised an eyebrow. "My best friend?"

"You know, Mulciber. Or Avery for that matter. They go hand-in-hand," James laughed.

Severus took a longer swig then mocked James' laugh. "Very funny, I'd sooner call the Giant Squid a friend than either of those two."

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As the hours slid by, James and Severus got separated. James excused himself a while ago to rile up the Ravenclaw team and carouse with the Gryffindor team. Severus took the opportunity to join



Lily, Alice, Frank, and Peter by the fireplace.

Lily gave him a tight hug when she saw him. Severus tried to ignore the strange, beady-eyed look Peter gave Severus.

"I haven't seen you around lately, it's been a while since we spoke," Lily said.

"I'm sorry Lily, I've been quite preoccupied lately. Remind me to tell you everything once this all dies down later tonight," he replied. Severus and Lily took a small step back from the group, the chatter continued in their absence.

"Do you know why Pettigrew keeps giving me that aberrant look?" Severus whispered. Once again, he tried to meet Peter's eyes, but he averted his gaze as Severus looked at him.

"I think he's jealous of you, you know? James, Remus, and Sirius spent so much time with him, but now they're closer with you - the guy they're supposed to hate - than him. Doesn't make sense if you ask me, he was the one that tried to cut them off in the first place," Lily explained.

Severus hummed and took a drink. "I've seen Pettigrew around Rosier and Nott a lot this year, seems like a moronic trade to me."

"I thought you liked those two," Lily said.

"Not particularly, I tolerated them all because there was no one else I could turn to," Severus paused, "besides you, of course."

The pair moved back into the circle crowding the fire. Frank thanked Severus for his help with Potions over the years, saying he would have failed and dropped out before the NEWTs without his tutelage.

"Don't bother thanking me, Longbottom. You were always nicer to me than the rest of your boyish housemates," Severus said.

"Not anymore though, right? I've watched them warm up to you over the year, especially James,"

Frank gave Severus a knowing look. "Where is he, anyways?"

Severus looked around, expecting to spot James still with the Quidditch players. Instead, he found a hostile-looking Mary. Curly brown hair streaming behind her and eyes ablaze, she honed in on Severus. He fully turned to face her as she stopped in front of him, ignoring the puzzled looks from the rest of the group.

"I guess you got what you wanted," she spat. Severus' stomach dropped, he didn't want to do this tonight. He didn't want to do this at all. He feigned a confused expression.

"What are you talking about, McDonald?" Severus asked. She seized him by the elbow, digging her thumb into the ligaments on the inside of the joint. He winced as she turned to drag him away.

After she got him to a secluded corner of the room, she rounded on him.

"You're a vindictive asshole, you know that? James and I had a good thing going until you fucked everything up." She jabbed him in the chest with her finger.

Severus pursed his lips, fighting back an insult that would only elevate the situation.

"And don't think I haven't seen you two around-" Mary's voice grated on his ears, but Severus detached himself from the berating jibes. As his filtered out her voice, Severus spotted Lily over Mary's shoulder. She was watching in earnest, eyebrows raised as her gaze flittered back and forth between Severus and Mary. He shot her a small smirk - one that Mary didn't seem to notice. Lily returned it, still silently observing the row.

"Honestly, I can't believe you manipulated him into hating me-"

Severus looked away from Lily and landed on the comforting face of the Head Boy. Just as James looked up to match his gaze, Severus focused back on Mary's face, still marred with anger. He realised that she had stopped speaking and was waiting for an answer of some kind from him. If only he had been paying attention. He took a stab in the dark.

"He's gay, Mary. The intelligent thing to do would be to move on," Severus said. Her face reddened and she balled her fists up at her sides.

As she inhaled to let fly another stream of curse words, James said from behind her, "Severus!"

He bypassed Mary and kissed Severus. After they pulled apart, Mary glowered at the pair. She knitted her hands together, pulling them to her chest. James turned his attention to Mary with a hand still resting on the small of Severus' back.

"What are you two talking about?" James asked. Mary remained silent, her face screwed up with indignation. She stepped backwards and turned away from them.

Before she got a chance to leave, James called out, "I guess you were right about him." She looked back over her shoulder, eyes dangerously wide. "What does that say about me? About you?" He asked.

Severus tensed in the resulting silence. He didn't know what James was talking about, but from the way Mary's jaw clenched, she knew exactly what he was referencing. Severus watched as Mary retreated, she gave him one last scathing look as she disappeared into the crowd.

"What do you mean she was right about me?" Severus asked.

James lingered on the spot where Mary stood moments ago, a frown set in his features. "Don't worry about it." He refocused on Severus, rubbing a hand up and down his arm. James gave Severus another kiss. Severus pulled back, crossing his arms over his chest.

"That was harsh, you didn't have to do that to her," Severus said. He wouldn't say it out loud, but the shocked look on her face improved his day tenfold.

"Trust me, Sev, she can deal with it after all the stress she put us through," James said. He smiled down at Severus and slung an arm around his shoulders. He pressed a kiss to his temple. "Another drink?"

They headed towards the stash of cans, James reached down and tossed one to Severus before picking one up for himself. As Severus cracked his open, he heard a familiar, soft voice from behind him.

"That was quite a show. Mary didn't look impressed," Lily said. Her floral perfume invaded Severus' senses. It was a comforting aroma that slowed his anxious heart rate.

"I have a feeling she won't be bothered us for a while," James said.

"And that was quite a kiss, does that mean you two have finally sorted out your shit?" Lily asked.

"You could say that," Severus said.

"Well, congratulations. It only took you guys seven months to get to this point," Lily winked at the both of them. She left without another word.

"I know this might be a long shot, but do you feel like dancing?" James asked. Severus chuckled and shook his head.

"You're right, that is a long shot. I don't dance," Severus replied. James plucked the can from Severus' hands and placed it on the table next to his own drink. He reached out and grasped Severus' slender, pale hands in his own.

A funky rhythm rang out over the gramophone, the crowd of people swayed and bopped to the tune. James pulled Severus in close and led him backwards into the crowd.

"Don't think about it, just move with me," James whispered in his ear. He laced their fingers together, Severus traced James' jawline with his eyes. James noticed him studying his face so he rested his forehead on Severus'.

"I'll never get tired of doing this," James whispered. Severus hummed in agreement. James began to rock to the beat, a slow RnB track flooded their ears - a change from the upbeat rhythm only minutes ago. Severus rocked in time with him, their foreheads still pressed together and hands intertwined. "This is nice, is all muggle music like this?"

"This is more common in America, but England is slowly catching on," Severus said. James withdrew his hands from Severus' and grabbed his waist. He pulled his face away to look at James in the eye.

Although Severus wouldn't admit it out loud, it was easier to forget about his self-consciousness when he could feel the warmth of James' hands through his clothes. Their eyes were locked, James loomed over him with a casual smirk on his face. With their torsos pressed together, James radiated so much heat and it comforted Severus. James softly hummed the melody to the song, picking it up fairly easily though he'd never heard it before.

"Aren't you getting the hang of it now? You don't even have to focus, your body just instinctually knows what to do," James leaned forward and whispered in his ear. His teeth grazed his ear lobe, biting gently and sending an unfamiliar chill down his spine.

James pressed a hand to the small of his back, pushing them impossibly closer. In turn, Severus snaked his arms around James' waist. James pulled back from his neck and kissed him gently, he smiled into the kiss as they swayed to the music. By this time of the night, no one cared if two people were kissing in the middle of the room - most of them found their own hook-ups, and the rest has passed out or left. As James kept him close with a hand pressed to the small of his back, he threaded his other hand through Severus' hair and held the back of his neck. James parted his lips and deepened the kiss, Severus was surprised by each little touch; every movement sent a thrill to his stomach.

"Steady on, James!" Severus heard someone shout, it sounded like Frank but he couldn't be certain. They paid him no attention, neither was willing to pull away from the other. Severus wished he could see James' face right now: his flushed cheeks; his furrowed brow; the ever-present strands of hair falling in his eyes that his circular glasses failed to keep away. He could never get tired of that handsome face - he was nothing short of a breathtaking view.

And if James whisked him away to a more private area for the night, well, who was he to tell?

## Chapter End Notes

I kinda like the idea of Neville getting his Potions skills from his father, so I had to include a little nod to that here. I'm so happy that you've all supported me this far!! If you're still reading, we have one final chapter to go, thank you for everything <3

# Let It Happen

## Chapter Summary

Sirius and Remus are on the same page finally. Lily says "bi rights". Severus and James solve a mystery.

## Chapter Notes

The final chapter is finally here! Thank you to everyone who supported me, whether you read the fic, left kudos, or commented on it. I appreciate each and every single one of you!

Chapter Title from Let It Happen by Tame Impala

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Sirius couldn't focus on much besides the pounding pain in his temples. Small sips of water and bites of toast in Great Hall started to alleviate some of the pain as the minutes went on. It wasn't the worst hangover he'd ever had, but there was one certain factor that could make his day or destroy his life.

Remus.

From what Sirius could remember, he confessed his true feelings to Remus last night then kissed him. That was the last solid memory he had, it was as though someone had cast a half-assed memory charm on him. James was missing in action too; last time Sirius saw him, he was with Severus - no surprises there.

A wayward brown curl fell in Sirius' eyes, he tried to brush it away but it kept falling back in place. He flicked his head back, finally managing to keep the curl out of his face, and locked eyes with Remus from across the hall.

He ditched his outer robes and sported the grey sweater and black slacks instead. His sandy brown hair was tousled lightly like it was disturbed by a breeze outside the Great Hall. When he met Sirius' eyes, his face lit up. It was a look that Sirius thought Remus should have more often.

"Hey," Sirius started weakly when Remus sat opposite him at the Gryffindor table. Remus shot him an easy smile, but something felt off.

"Listen, Sirius. Do you remember last night?" Remus asked. Sirius' stomach dropped, from the look in Remus' eyes maybe something else had happened. Fuck, he hoped not, he wanted to be able to remember his first time with Remus.

"Bits and pieces, why? Is there something I should know?" Sirius asked cautiously.

"You told me you loved me," Remus said bluntly. Ah. "And you kissed me."

"Did you at least kiss me back?" Sirius teased. He knew the answer, he just wanted to hear Remus say it.

A faint pink colour dusted Remus' cheeks, "Yes."

"And what did you think of it?"

"I quite liked it."

Sirius smiled. He was about to say something particularly flirty when James sat down next to Remus.

"Rough night, Moony? Padfoot? Have you two finally realised you were both pining all this time for no reason?" James teased. He poured himself a glass of pumpkin juice while he awaited their reply.

"Clever, Prongs," Remus smiled and rolled his eyes. Sirius wasn't paying attention, his eyes were drawn to the green and silver tie around his neck.

"What is *that*?" Sirius asked, squinting his eyes and pointing at the tie.

James blanched as Remus followed to where Sirius was pointing and choked on his own drink. James grasped the tie around his neck and looked down to make sure he wasn't hallucinating the whole incident.

"James, I don't think I saw you *or* Severus after about quarter to twelve," Remus said nonchalantly. Sirius laughed when James' cheeks burned a deep red. He looked over his shoulder towards the Slytherin table. When Sirius followed his gaze, he found that Severus donned a red and gold tie. A girl on the Slytherin table hit Severus' arm and pointed at the tie, he had the same embarrassed look that James sported.

"How did you even manage to switch ties? You two weren't wearing them at the party last night. Unless, when you left you- *oh*," Sirius stopped in the middle of his sentence and pursed his lips, holding in an incredulous laugh. James slammed a broad palm down on the table and glared at Sirius, but this only spurred on his laughter.

"Clearly, I- forget it, I'll be back in a minute," James said slowly. He rose from the table and met Severus' gaze. He got the hint and rose too, following James out of the Great Hall.

"And James wants to call us oblivious," Remus chuckled.

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Severus tried to push the debacle in the Great Hall early in the day from his mind. He, James, and Lily strolled the Hogwarts castle grounds together. It was sometime after lunch, and the rest of the afternoon was free.

"Is that Remus and Sirius?" Lily asked, squinting into the sun. She raised a hand to shield her eyes but continued looking in the direction of a giant oak. Sirius and Remus sat together in the shade, Sirius enveloped one of Remus' hands in his own.

The trio crossed the grounds and joined them, sprawling out in the shade. Severus sat cross-legged in between Lily and James, Remus leaned up against the tree trunk while Sirius rested his head on his shoulder.

"So all we need to do now is find a man for you, Lily," James said, nudging her with his elbow. He

bared his teeth in feigned aggression, "And if he fucks up, he'll have to answer to the four of us. We're like your older brothers or something."

James flopped onto his back on the grass, plucking blades with his fingertips as he stared up at the leaves above. Sirius made a noise of agreement, and Lily smiled confidently.

"I guess now's a better time than ever to say that I'm going to Hogsmeade next weekend with Marlene," Lily said. James shot back up, eyes filled with sheer glee.

"No fucking way," James said. He swung an arm around her shoulders and shook her lightly from side to side. She giggled as he patted her shoulder and withdrew his hand. Remus and Sirius shot her matching smiles. Severus merely raised an eyebrow at her.

"Do you remember telling me about your Patronus?" Severus asked. Lily turned her head to look at him, an eyebrow arched.

"Yeah, a lioness."

"A giant *cat*, I'm not going to be the one to explain the symbolism," Severus smirked. A single laugh escaped Remus' throat before Lily cut him off with a glare. Lily delivered a sharp backhand to Severus' upper arm and started talking before the other two caught on.

"I never asked you about your Patronus problem again, did it ever change back? Did you find out why it changed in the first place?" Lily asked, leaning back on her palms.

"No, it never changed back. Although I do miss the owl, she's starting to grow on me," Severus said.

"She?" Sirius asked.

Severus took out his wand and closed his eyes. It was easier to conjure up a Patronus when he was alone. The grounds were almost barren already, and it was easy to block out his friends. "Expecto Patronum."

From the tip of his wand burst a fully corporeal doe, glowing an iridescent silvery blue from head to toe. She bowed her head towards Severus and gracefully walked in a circle, making a show of stepping over everyone's legs as she made her way around. When she reached James last, she sat down at his feet, folding her legs up underneath her.

"She reminds me of Bambi. Do you remember watching that, Sev?" Lily asked. Severus was about to say that Bambi was a stag, not a doe when Sirius gasped in realisation.

"No fucking way. Prongs-" he turned to face James. Severus followed his line of sight to James' disbelieving expression.

"What is it?" Severus asked tensely.

James drew his own wand and echoed the same incantation. A shimmery blue stag leaped from the tip of his wand. Severus knew how foolish he looked, gaping at the beautiful animal, but he made no attempt to amend his expression.

"Has yours always been a stag?" Severus asked softly, transfixed by the sight and its potential implications.

"Yeah, you said yours changed to the doe?" James said.



"About a month before we became friends, strangely enough. Well, I thought it was strange and random then, but now-"

"I was right, then. It *was* a premonition, and you had the gall to laugh at the divine explanation I tried to give you, Severus Snape," Lily said, jabbing a finger into his chest. Severus bat her finger away and put away his wand, his Patronus disappearing from her place at James' feet.

"Pardon me for not respecting your divination abilities, Seer Evans," Severus teased.

"Does this mean you two are soulmates?" Remus asked, looking back and forth between James and Severus. Severus rested his hand on top of James' where it lay flat against the grass. He squeezed softly before relaxing.

"I'm not sure. I don't think soulmates is the right word for it, but it must be something along that path," Severus explained.

At least this narrowed down his search, when he went to the library next he was sure he could find a book about the link between soul magic and love.

"James, I think there's something you should tell Snape. Or show him. It might push him in the right direction," Sirius said with a peculiar glint in his eyes. He stood up, pulling Remus up with him. Lily got the hint and followed them. "Good luck, Prongs."

*That* was intriguing. He turned to face James, who looked around the area to see if anyone else was near. He stood up and grabbed Severus by the wrist.

"I can't show you here, but there's something you should know. It might help you understand more about the matching Patronus situation when you get back to your research in the library," James said.

He led Severus down to the edge of the black lake. The surface glistened in the afternoon sun, unbroken and calm. No one was this far down, but to be safe, James led Severus from the open ground to several metres into the forest. The trees and shrubbery should conceal whatever James had to show him.

"Stand back," James said. Severus took a step back, keeping his eyes trained on James' stoic face.

James began to change, his skin darkened and his bone structure shifted. In less than a second, James had disappeared and a large stag took his place. With the added height from the antlers, it was taller than Severus.

"James? You're an Animagus?" Severus asked. He grunted and stamped his front right hoof. Severus didn't move, he was at a loss for words. Several inexplicable occurrences and references over the years clicked into place, this made *so* much sense.

James took a tentative step forward and pushed his nose into the palm of his hand lying by his side. Severus couldn't help himself, he reached up to stroke the stag's head and scratch behind its ear. The hair there was quite soft, Severus only pulled his fingers away when something fell from the sky above.

An owl circled above before it landed on a nearby tree branch. A letter lay on the forest floor, Severus leaned down to pick it up. His name was scrawled on the front in an emerald green ink. Upon noticing the letter, James transformed back.

"Who's it from?" James asked. Severus stuffed the letter in his pocket.

"I'll open it after you explain yourself," Severus retorted. James chuckled weakly, rubbing the back of his neck and pushing his glasses up with one finger.

"Well, you know about Remus', er-, situation. After we found out, Sirius, Peter, and I decided to become Animagi. We weren't much help when we were humans, Remus would have torn us to shreds, but as animals, we could keep him company. It was easier to help him that way," James explained as they started walking back up towards the castle.

"Let me guess, when Sirius and Remus call you Prongs-"

"It's because of the antlers? Clever, Severus, I knew you had a brain in there," James said with a shit-eating grin.

"Shut up," Severus groaned and shoved him away. James stumbled back, laughing, before quickly regaining his spot walking by Severus' side.

"Now that I've held up my end of the deal, open the letter. It could be important," James urged.

Severus pulled the letter out of his pocket and regarded it. He flipped it over, it was sent from Professor Slughorn. He carefully opened it and read the contents.

*"Dear Mr. Severus Snape,*

*As you may recall, we discussed a certain career opportunity two weeks ago. You don't have to reach a final decision quite yet, however I urge you to strongly consider my proposal. The NEWTs are less than a month away, and I would like to prepare things for you if you accept my request. Come by my office tonight to discuss any queries you may have.*

*Regards,*

*Professor Horace Slughorn."*

Severus read the letter twice, he'd almost forgotten about Slughorn's offer. While he was less keen on the teaching part, he supposed he should accept just to get some further Potions training. Regardless, it was going to be a lot of work. He was going to have to put a lot of time and energy into this course over the next several years.

His worry must have shown on his face, for James said, "What's the matter?" He brushed his arm as he spoke, sending a tingling sensation up Severus' arm.

"I forgot to tell you-, we were so busy that it slipped my mind. Slughorn offered me a tutorship after the NEWTs, he wants to train me to be the next Potions Master for the school," Severus said.

James smiled at him, "Severus, that's amazing," his smile fell, "why aren't you happy?"

"It's- it's going to be a lot of work, and I'm not cut out to be a teacher here. I'm terrible with children," Severus protested.

"You've been tutoring people from the younger year levels for a long time, you seem fine at it to me," James leveled with him. "You just need to stick to teaching something you're passionate about."

Severus mulled over his words, James was right. He should accept Slughorn's offer but decide on whether or not he wanted to teach here after the fact.

"There's something else," Severus started. He stopped walking, James turned to face him. His hair moved softly in the breeze; Severus watched as a lock flitted across his forehead, falling down over his glasses every few seconds.

For all James Potter's flaws that Severus had noted over the years, there was no denying that he was beautiful.

"What is it?" James asked.

"This tutelage is going to be taxing, I don't know how much spare time it will give me, and I don't want to be a burden to you," Severus confessed. It was true, he didn't want James to be stuck with someone who never had a spare moment to see him. "And you have your Auror career you want to focus on, or the Transfiguration mentorship, whichever you decide-"

"You think that will keep me away from you?" James cut him off. Severus clenched his jaw, he didn't think that James would be so quick to oppose him. "Severus Snape, the only thing that could convince me *not* to be your boyfriend is if you outright turned me down right now."

Severus blinked and sighed, "Was that your way of asking me out?"

James smiled and grasped his hand, lacing their fingers together, "Yes, I realised that I never actually asked you. So, will you be my boyfriend?" James' grin widened as Severus smiled at the cheesy question. He nodded, squeezing James' hand tighter.

"I need verbal confirmation," James said.

"Yes, you prick," Severus shot back.

James brought his other hand up to cup Severus' face, pulling him into a kiss. It was brief but sweet, and Severus relished in the sensation of James' soft lips on his. He would never grow tired of it. When James pulled away, he could still feel the pressure on his lips. Severus brought his own hand up to James' face and rested a thumb against his lower lip.

"Are you sure you want this?" Severus asked under his breath.

"What?"

"It's not too late to back out, I know I'm not easy," Severus said, a little crestfallen.

James kissed him in response. When he pulled away, he met Severus' eyes and smiled, "I'm not looking for easy."

## Chapter End Notes

Thank you again for seeing this out to the end. I'd love it if you left your final thoughts below. If you like my writing, you should keep an eye out for my future Harry Potter fics: I have a Drarry WIP that I'm posting right now, and I have also planned a Jeverus one shot, a Snirius multi-chaptered fic, and a Snupin multi-chaptered fic. Thank you once more!! <3

## End Notes

If you enjoyed, please leave a kudos and a comment! I really appreciate it <3

I created a spotify account and a playlist to go along with this fanfiction. The link is [here!](#)

The first four songs are the main songs that inspired this fic, the next several songs are some of the more relevant chapter title songs, and the rest are songs that I listened to while writing this. I hope you enjoy!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!